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*In the name of God
the Compassionate, the Merciful*

“VERILY AS FOR THOSE WHO
BELIEVED AND DID RIGHTEOUS
DEEDS, WE SHALL NOT MAKE THE
REWARD OF ANYONE WHO DOES
HIS RIGHTEOUS DEEDS IN THE MOST
PERFECT MANNER TO BE LOST”

(Holy Qur'an)

Surat al Kahf (XVIII,30)

EXCERPTS FROM HIS MAJESTY SULTAN QABOOS BIN SAID'S SPEECHES

"The highly eventful years that have passed since the consultation process was first introduced have reinforced the concepts of joint action and mutual co-operation between the citizens and the state's administrative authorities. The State and Consultation Councils' great efforts in preparing economic and social studies, revising laws and regulations, and putting forward recommendations and proposals on a range of issues of concern to the community, are designed to develop our society and enable every segment of it to achieve prosperity. Their endeavours have brought tangible benefits to this national enterprise of ours."

"Nations can only be built through the efforts of their people and the only way they can join the march of civilization and progress is through knowledge, experience and training. It is no secret that the true wealth of any nation lies in human resources that are capable of pushing the wheel of progress forward in every sphere of life."

"We have always stressed the importance of knowledge and science and been ready to embrace new developments in those areas. Information technology and telecommunications have become the main engine of development in this third millennium. That is why we have attached importance to producing a national strategy for developing people's potential and skills in this field, as well as e-government services."

"The Sultanate of Oman affirms the importance of mutual understanding as the means of reaching a formula upon which the states of our region can agree. The government and people of Oman wish to see our region enjoy lasting stability and security that will create the right conditions for development and progress."

"The Sultanate of Oman has always been known for its clear policy of co-operation with all, based on the firm principles of mutual respect, dialogue and the rejection of force as a way to resolving problems, because it believes that this will lead to societies in which a spirit of fraternity and stability will prevail."

QABOOS BIN SAID



His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said

Introduction

Since His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said made his first historic address on 23 July 1970, the procession of Oman's Renaissance has advanced across four and a half decades, delivering its promised largesse, buoyed by high aspirations and unstoppable goals and focused intently on its ultimate destination: a prosperous Oman reborn as a modern State founded on science, knowledge, and human endeavour.

The mission of the Renaissance has been to offer every man, woman and child in Oman the opportunity and means to grow and advance, to embrace education and every support available to equip them to bear their responsibilities willingly and to the best of their ability. In its conception, the Omani citizen was to become a partner in the formulation and implementation of the national development programme; to aim for a better life in every respect. His/her journey would parallel that of the country's own progression. As the institutional structure of the modern state established its foundations and took on greater complexity, so too would the citizens the State was designed to serve. With the increasing sophistication and integration of the various State institutions - the executive, legislative, judicial and service arms of the administration - bending and adapting to the requirements of the Basic Law, so too would the citizen grow into his/her dynamic role in building the nation. Citizen and State would travel together to share the rewards of ever greater progress and prosperity.

The Renaissance has logged achievements of staggering and wonderful proportion over the past 45 years, and these achievements have extended to every corner of this land. This book offers some small glimpses of this twin success story, of nation and citizen. It is a success story that has unfolded as the manifested vision of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said. May God protect him and grant him enduring health and happiness and may His Majesty in his wisdom continue to bring prosperity and peace to Oman.

Ministry of Information

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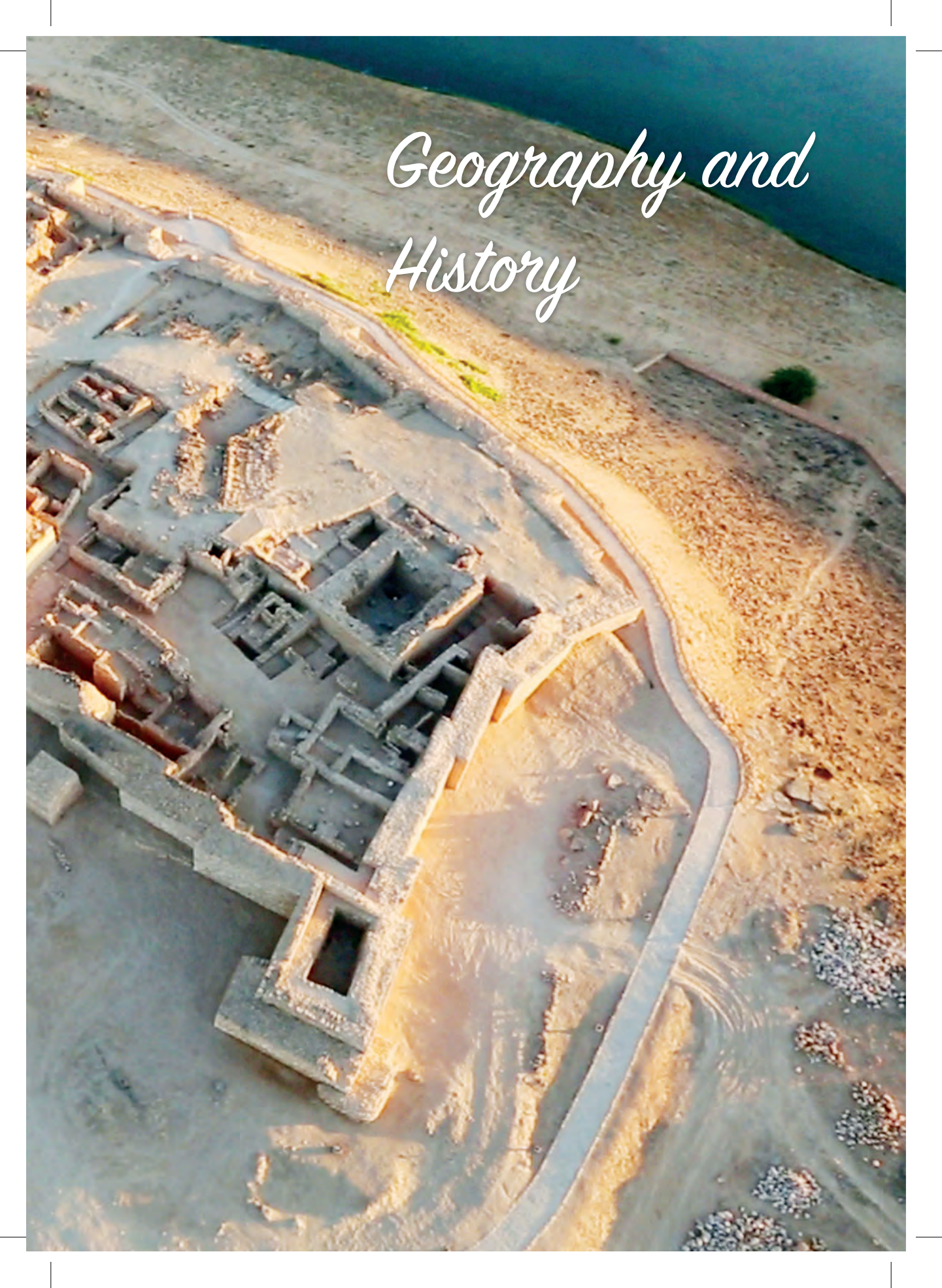
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*Modern Facilities and
the Environment*



An aerial photograph of ancient stone ruins, possibly Mayan or Aztec, featuring a complex grid of rectangular structures. A river flows along the right side of the ruins, and a large body of water is visible in the upper right corner. The scene is captured in warm, golden light, likely during sunrise or sunset.

Geography and History

Geography and History

GEOGRAPHY

Situated in the extreme south-eastern corner of the Arabian Peninsula, the Sultanate of Oman extends from latitude 16.40 to 26.20 degrees north and from longitude 51.50 to 59.40 degrees east. Its 3,165 kilometre coastline runs northwards from the Arabian Sea and the entrance to the Indian Ocean in the far south-west to the Sea of Oman and Musandam, where it overlooks the strategic Strait of Hormuz at the entrance to the Gulf.

Oman shares borders with the Republic of Yemen to the south-west, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the west, and the United Arab Emirates to the north. It has sovereignty over a number of small islands in the Sea of Oman and the Strait of Hormuz, including Salamah and Her Daughters, as well as Masirah and the Hallaniyat Islands, and some other small islands in the Arabian Sea.

Lying on the Tropic of Cancer, Oman is one of the world's hot, arid regions, though part of the south of the country has a tropical climate.

As well as dominating the oldest and most important sea trade route in the world between the Gulf and the Indian Ocean, Oman – with an area of 309,500 square kilometres – is also criss-crossed by the old north-south and east-west overland trans-Arabian caravan routes.

The Sultanate's most distinctive geographical feature is the Hajar mountain range, which extends down from the north in a great arc from Ru'us al Jibal at RasMusandam (by the Strait of Hormuz, gateway to the Gulf) to Ras al Hadd - the Arabian Peninsula's most south-easterly point, which overlooks the Indian Ocean. At its highest point in the Jabal al Akhdar region, the Hajar range reaches a height of 3,000 metres.

In the governorate of Musandam the mountains rise to a height of around 1,800 metres above the Strait of Hormuz, which runs between the Omani and Iranian coasts; the navigable international shipping lanes lie on the Omani side.

Omanis compare the Hajar mountain range to a human backbone. They call the area lying on the Sea of Oman the Batinah, or "Stomach", and the area to the west of the mountains the Dhahirah, or "Back". The Batinah - the coastal area formed by the *wadis* (dried up areas of river bed) that flow down from the mountains – is between 15 and 80 kilometres wide and over 300 kilometres long. The Sultanate's main agricultural area, which boasts farms and orchards irrigated by groundwater, runs northwards from Muscat to the borders of the United Arab Emirates.



Several *wadis* cut right through the Hajar mountains. The largest – Wadi Samail – links the city of Muscat on the coast with the *wilayats* of Izki and Nizwa in the interior. Omanis call the mountains to the west of this wadi al Hajar al Gharbi (the Western Hajar); this region includes the Jabal al Akdhar and the *wilayats* of Rustaq, Nakhl, al Awabi and several others.

The mountain area to the east of Wadi Sumail is called al Hajar al Sharqi (the Eastern Hajar) and includes – among others - the *wilayats* of Sumail and Bidbid. The highest peak in the Hajar range is Jabal Shams in the Dakhilyah Governorate, the summit of which is around 3,000 metres above sea level.

At Qurum Heights in Muscat the Omani coast narrows and becomes rocky with numerous inlets. The shoreline from South Muscat Point to Ras al Hadd is similar. From Ras al Hadd to Filim on Masirah Bay the Sharqiyah Sands extend over a band of terrain some 160 Kilometres long by 8 Kilometres wide. To the south west of Masirah Island lies a vast area of flat, stony ground known as the Jiddat al Harasis. To the west of the Sharqiyah Sands is a stretch of low-lying rocky terrain around 250 kilometres wide crossed by wadis running from north to south; these include Wadi Halfain and Wadi Andam.

West of Masirah Island is the peninsula of Barr al Hikman, which is separated from Masirah by a channel 14 kilometres wide. It consists of salt flats, which can reach as far as 5 kilometres inland and, at some times of the year, are covered by the sea. The population of this area earns its living from fishing.

The Rock Garden in the Wusta Governorate, where the stunning face of nature is still visible after millions of years.





The wonders of Wadi Al-Abyad.

The Omani coast – including the Wusta and Dhofar Governorates – extends along the Arabian Sea for a distance of 560 kilometres, some 130 kilometres of which are exposed to monsoon rains. This latter stretch consists of a coastal plain between eight and ten kilometres wide and includes Salalah and several other *wilayats* such as Taqah, Mirbat, Sadah, Rakhyut and Dhalkut. The coastal areas of the Governorate of Dhofar are rich in fish including prawns and *hamour* (grouper), as well as sardines, the surplus catches of which are used as animal fodder or fertiliser. The mountain region of Dhofar extends from east to west for a distance of around 400 kilometres, from opposite the Hallaniyat Islands to the borders of the Republic of Yemen, forming a continuous chain which includes Jabal Samhan in the east and Jabal al Qamar in the west. At no point is this range more than 23 kilometres wide or higher than 2,500 metres. A 75 kilometre swathe of these mountains is cloaked in greenery from June to September each year during the *khareef* (monsoon) season, when the south-western monsoon winds give the region a very different character from the rest of the Arabian Peninsula and the rains transform the land into a delightful summer resort with rich pastures.

Frankincense trees grow in some areas – a living reminder that the region was once renowned for its trade in this substance – the main source of its wealth in ancient times.

Fresh water springs flow abundantly in Dhofar throughout the year.

Geology

The landscapes of Oman are strikingly varied and of bewildering beauty: cool lofty mountains cut by over 1000 meter deep gorges, seemingly endless simmering hot gravel planes, golden high sand dunes and grey salt-flats which all attract tourists and geologists alike.

Superb rock outcrops in the mountains are a paradise for geologists from around the world. The country's rock record spans to more than one billion years. Next to thick layers of limestone, testifying to tropical conditions in the past, the rock recorded three periods when the country was ice covered, somewhat surprising given its present climate. Dark coloured Semail ophiolites, a layered mix of volcanics and rocks originating from very deep up to 10 km) in the earth, were pushed from north to south onto the land over hundreds of kilometres 75 million years ago. These ophiolites locally can be rich in copper and chrome.

The flat Interior plains are hiding a kilometres thick stack of much older sediments that host the country's hydrocarbon resources. Ancient salt, which comes to the surface in several salt hills, such as Qarat Kibrit, has been mined in the past, but also played an important role in forming oil and gas accumulations.



Nature's exquisite bounty finds expression in the Omani landscape.





Palm oasis at Birkat Al-Mouz, Governorate of Nizwa.



Muscat .. bustling hive of economic activity, tourism and trade.

The governorates and *wilayats* (districts)

The Sultanate is a modern state and in that context its administrative divisions are among its most distinctive features. According to Royal Decree No. 114/2011, issued on 26th October 2011, Oman comprises 11 governorates:- Muscat, Dhofar, Musandam, Buraymi, the Dakhiliyah, the North Batinah, the South Batinah, the South Sharqiyah, the North Sharqiyah, the Dhahirah and the Wusta.

Each of these governorates has its own distinctive administrative, geographical and economic significance and comprises a number of *wilayats* (districts). (In all, the Sultanate has a total of 61 *wilayats*.) The Ministry of the Interior is responsible for overseeing the governorates, with the exception of the Muscat and Dhofar Governorates. In accordance with Royal Decree No.115/2011, Sultan Qaboos appoints the governors of each of the governorates, while the *wali* (local governor) of each *wilayat* is responsible for the local administration and acts as a link between the government, its institutions and the public.



His Majesty promulgated the Municipal Councils Law under Royal Decree No. 116/2011 on 26th October 2011 as a further step designed to streamline the administrative and municipal systems across the country and simplify procedures for members of the public.

Over a succession of development plans Oman has been able to ensure that balanced and integrated development takes place across the country's different governorates. Major projects and industrial zones have been set up from Muscat to Salalah, from Sur to Sohar, from Nizwa to Musandam and Buraymi and from Ibri to Duqm, within the framework of an overall plan that balances the nation's priorities and the needs of the individual governorates. Different governorates take turns in hosting major national and religious events, including, in particular, the National Day celebrations.

Muscat Governorate

Muscat Governorate is the heart of the country's political, economic and administrative system, as well as the location of the capital city – Muscat – the seat of government and the nerve centre of the state's administrative apparatus. It is also a vibrant hub of local and international economic, commercial and tourist activity.

Lying on the Sea of Oman at the southern end of the Batinah coast, Muscat Governorate borders the Eastern Hajar mountains and the North Sharqiyah Governorate to the east, the South Batinah Governorate to the west and the Dakhiliyah Governorate to the south.

Muscat has the highest population density of all the provinces in the Sultanate, with a population of 775,878 residents, according to the most recent (2010) Census of Population, Housing and Establishments. However, according to June 2015 statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information, this figure has risen to 1,281,153.

This governorate witnesses active development in all sectors, including the establishment of a modern road network linking Muscat with the other



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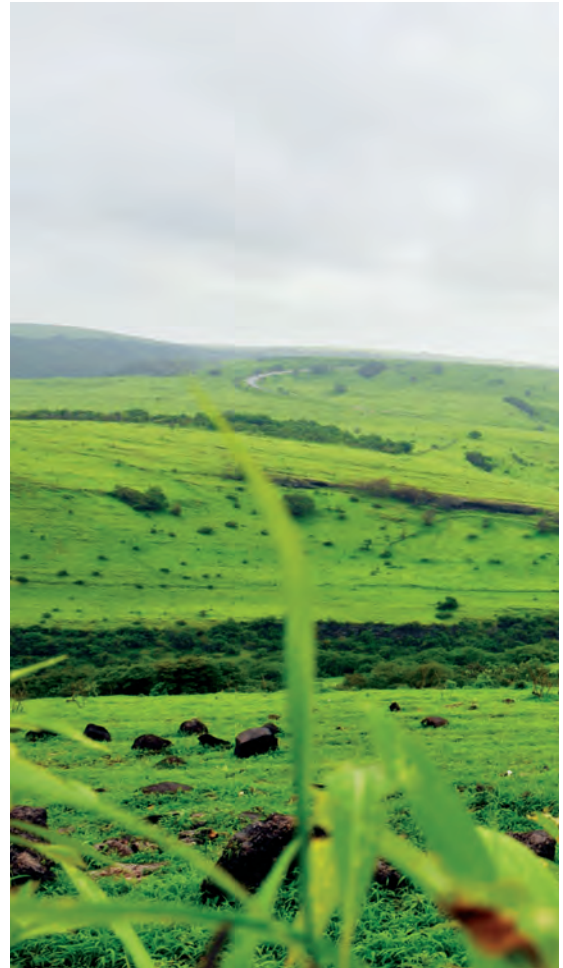


wilayats in the governorate and beyond, landscaping projects, parks, marketplaces, public utilities and upgrading of residential quarters and business districts. Upgrading of commercial and residential neighbourhoods has secured for Muscat a place among the most modern of cities. Its development strategies embrace the gifts of the past, while planning for the bright promise of the future.

Muscat Governorate comprises six *wilayats*: Muscat, Mutrah, Amerat, Bausher, Seeb and Quriyat, each of which is administered by a *wali* appointed by the Governor of Muscat. The *wilayat* of Muscat is the Governorate's main *wilayat*.

The Governorate is the administrative body responsible for providing public services within its administrative boundaries; its affairs are administered by the Minister of State and Governor of Muscat.

The Municipal Council of Muscat has 26 members representing the *wilayats* of the governorate.



Dhofar Governorate

The Dhofar Governorate has played an important role in Oman's history, in recent times as well as in the more distant past, and it was from Salalah, in Dhofar, that Oman's contemporary era of development first saw the light of day under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said. Historically, Dhofar – the Arabian Peninsula's Land of Frankincense – was Oman's great gateway to the Indian Ocean and the crossroads of Southern Arabia's caravan routes, while in recent times it has become the country's gateway to progress and prosperity.

Dhofar Governorate lies at the southern end of Oman, with Salalah some 1,000 kilometres distant from Muscat. It borders the Wusta Governorate to the north-east, the Arabian Sea to the south-east and south, the Republic of Yemen to the west and south-west and, to the north and north-west, the Rub' al Khali desert, or Empty Quarter, renowned for its seasonal climate,



The Dhofar Governorate has played an important role in Oman's history, in recent times as well as in the more distant past.





or *khareef*, as it is known locally. This is where she experiences her sweetest times amid lush plateaus cloaked in the rolling white mist that moistens and cools the air.

This governorate has ten *wilayats* – Salalah, the main hub, and Taqah, Mirbat, Rakhyut, Thumrait, Dhalkut, Mazyounah, Muqshin, Shaleem and the Hallaniyat Islands, and Sadah.

Dhofar Governorate had a population of 249,729, according to the 2010 Census of Population, Housing and Establishments, but according to the statistics of the National Centre for Statistics and Information, as published in June 2015, this figure has now reached 386,017.

The governorate's affairs are administered by the Minister of State and Governor of Dhofar.

The Municipal Council of Dhofar has 24 members representing the governorate's *wilayats*.

**Dhofar .. in all of its
Autumn glory.**

The Strait of Hormuz
is the most important
regional and international
waterway for oil exports
and trade

Musandam Governorate

The Musandam Governorate lies at the northern end of the Sultanate of Oman. It is of immense strategic importance because of its geographical position overlooking the Strait of Hormuz, which forms the eastern gateway for shipping between the Gulf littoral states and the outside world. Linking the Gulf with the open waters of the Sea of Oman and the Indian Ocean, the Strait of Hormuz is the most important regional and international waterway for oil exports and trade as some 90 per cent of the Gulf states' oil exports pass through it.

The Governorate of Musandam has four *wilayats* – Khasab, the main hub, as well as Daba, Bukha and Madha.

The population of the province was 31,425 in the 2010 General Census of Population, Housing and Establishment, and 40,852 in the statistics of the National Centre for Statistics and Information for the month of June 2015. The Municipal Council has 8 members representing the various *wilayats*.

Musandam Governorate ends the year 2015 with a completed strategy for the overall development of the province, including area planning and sectoral plans for the tourist and agricultural industries, as well as all services offered to the citizens of this governorate. The strategy is incorporated into the Ninth Five-Year Plan (2016-2020), and looks forward beyond that into the overall vision for the future up to 2040.

Musandam .. nestling
between land and sea.





The Buraymi Governorate

The Buraymi Governorate is renowned for its strategic location in the north-west of the Sultanate. Historically, because of its height above sea level and abundant water supplies from its wadis and *aflaaj* (irrigation channels), it also became an important trading station on a major trade route and a significant producer of wheat, dates and other fruit.

There are several forts and castles in Buraymi, including – among others - al Khandaq, al Hillah, Bait al Nadd and al Khabib.

Buraymi is witnessing the implementation of promising development projects which are meant to promote the governorate's tourism potential. The new tourism and development schemes offer a pronounced and very promising advance to a level of development sophistication that will reflect not only on Buraymi, but on the Sultanate as a whole, given the scale and multifaceted nature of the projects envisaged.

The Governorate has three *wilayats*– Buraymi (the main one), Mahadah and al Sinainah – and a population of 72,917 according to the 2010 Census of Population, Housing and Establishments, or according to the June 2015 statistics of the National Centre for Statistics and Information the population has now reached 102,953. Its Municipal Council has 8 members.

Buraymi .. where development embraces tourism.



Buraymi is witnessing the implementation of promising development projects which are meant to promote the governorate's tourism potential.





The Dakhiliyah .. the Sultanate's strategic depth.



With its rich history, cultural heritage, location and topographical features, the Dakhiliyah Governorate is one of the Sultanate's most important governorates and forms the country's strategic hinterland.



The Dakhiliyah Governorate

With its rich history, cultural heritage, location and topographical features, the Dakhiliyah Governorate is one of the Sultanate's most important governorates and forms the country's strategic hinterland. It consists of a large upland in the centre of the country; this includes the Jabal al Akhdar mountain range, the slopes of which descend southwards in the direction of the desert. A pivotal link between the Sultanate's different governorates, the Dakhiliyah borders the South and North Sharqiyah Governorates to the east, the Dhahirah Governorate to the west, the Wusta Governorate to the south and the Muscat and South Batinah Governorates to the north.

The Dakhiliyah has seen several development projects in the public service area reach culmination in 2015, notably in health, education and urban services, as well as road infrastructure, industry and communications.

As well as being one of the country's main agricultural regions, the Dakhiliyah Governorate has also played a prominent role in the country's history.

It has eight *wilayats*– Nizwa (its main hub), Bahla, Manah, al Hamra, Adam, Izki, Sumail and Bidbid – and, according to the 2010 Census of Population, Housing and Establishments, it had a population of 326,651, but is now up to 416,843 according to the June 2015 statistics of the National Centre for Statistics and Information.

Its Municipal Council has 26 members.

North Batinah Governorate

The North Batinah Governorate - a coastal strip between the sea and the mountains – is geographically and economically one of the Sultanate's most important governorates. It has six *wilayats*– Sohar (the main one), Shinas, Liwa, Saham, Khabourah and Suwaiq.

The Governorate occupies a crucial geographical location along the southern shore of the Sea of Oman. It has long been a major Omani maritime and trade link with countries bordering the Gulf and the Indian Ocean. A visual representation of this governorate's major economic potential is the broad Batinah Plain, one of the Sultanate's largest agricultural plains. It is also rich in mineral resources, which are currently being exploited as a basis for several vital heavy industry projects.

Sohar Industrial Port is one of Oman's mega-projects. The Sohar Industrial Estate, which is linked to the port, continues to attract a large number of major industrial and manufacturing enterprises, including fertiliser, petrochemicals, aluminium and iron projects. These operations have been further boosted with the establishment of the Free Zone Sohar and Sohar Airport, a new portal to the Sultanate, one which will speed up the development of nearby commercial and industrial projects and help promote investment.

Meanwhile, Royal directives issued by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos to

A visual representation of this governorate's major economic potential is the broad Batinah Plain, one of the Sultanate's largest agricultural plains. It is also rich in mineral resources.

The Batinah North.. many development projects highlight its optimal position geographically and economically.



convert the Port of Shinas into a commercial port and link North Batinah to Musandam by sea, via passenger and freight routes, and overland by rail, are ongoing. The rail link will be developed as part of the GCC railway project and will traverse the provinces of North and South Batinah alongside the Batinah Expressway.

The Governorate's population stood at 483,582 in the 2010 Census of Population, Housing and Establishments and at 681,616 in the June 2015 statistics of the National Centre for Statistics and Information.

The North Batinah Municipal Council has 28 members.

The South Batinah Governorate

This governorate, with its six *wilayats* of Rustaq (its main centre), Awabi, Nakhl, Wadi al Ma'awil, Barka and Musana'ah, had a 2010 population of 289,008, according to the General Census of Population and Housing, and Establishment, and had risen to 376,225 in the June 2015 statistics of the National Centre for Statistics and Information.

It lies between the Sea of Oman to the east and the slopes of the Western Hajar mountain range to the west. Because of its location, economic assets and large population, it has been an influential player throughout the course of Oman's history.

Due to its central position and its economic resources, the South Batinah has always played a significant role in Oman's history.

Many achievements have been logged in the public service areas in this governorate, including road infrastructure, telecommunications, extensive public parks and other urban planning and amenities to keep pace with the development of economic and social life in the Sultanate.

Specific attention has been focused on the the development of the natural warm water springs of Ain al Kasfah in the *wilayat* of Rustaq and Ain al Thuwarah in the *wilayat* of Nakhl. South Batinah Municipal Council has 22 members.



Due to its central position
and its economic resources,
the South Batinah
has always played a
significant role in Oman's
history.



The South Sharqiyah Governorate

The South Sharqiyah Governorate, which occupies the north-eastern part of the Sultanate of Oman, borders the Arabian Sea to the east, the Sharqiyah Sands to the south and the Dakhiliyah Governorate to the west.

The Governorate comprises five *wilayats* – Sur (the main *wilayat*), al Kamil wa'lWafi, Ja'alan Bani Bu Hassan, Ja'alan Bani Bu Ali and Masirah.

South Sharqiyah has seen the implementation of a range of development projects, along with a major extension of the road network and infrastructure specific to tourism. The Al Saleel Nature Reserve is an important project in eco-diversity, which contributes to maintaining the regional ecological balance and promotes sustainable tourism.

The South Sharqiyah Governorate is home to major economic projects, including LNG plants, a urea-ammonia smelter and the Industrial Estate of Sur, a hub for small and medium industries.

**The Batinah South ..
where history has deep
roots.**





The Sharqiyah South.. the timeless beauty of its pristine shores.

North Sharqiyah has benefited from substantial development projects, spread over a range of public services, including health, education, road infrastructure, water supply, as well as tourism projects.

The Sharqiyah North.. palm trees flourish in a desert oasis.

With a population of 188,032 in the 2010 Census of Population, Housing and Establishments and 275,901 in the June 2015 statistics of the National Centre for Statistics and Information, the governorate's Municipal Council has 16 representative members.

The North Sharqiyah Governorate

The North Sharqiyah Governorate overlooks the inner flanks of the Eastern Hajar mountain range. It shares borders with the governorate of Muscat to the north, the Dakhiliyah Governorate to the west and the South Sharqiyah Governorate to the east and south.

North Sharqiyah's six *wilayats* are Ibra, the main centre, Mudhaibi, Bidiyah, Qabil, Wadi Bani Khalid and Dima wa'l Ta'een.

With a population of 162,482 in the 2010 Census of Population, Housing and Establishments, and 349,634 in the June 2015 statistics of the National Centre for Statistics and Information, the Governorate's Municipal Council has 16 representative members.

North Sharqiyah has benefited from substantial development projects, spread over a range of public services, including health, education, road infrastructure, water supply, as well as tourism projects.





The Dhahirah Governorate

The Dhahirah Governorate is richly endowed with agricultural resources, history and tourist potential, and during the years of Oman's modern Renaissance it has achieved impressive development in every sphere. It consists of a semi-desert plain which slopes down southwards from the Western Hajar range towards the desert of the Rub' al Khali, or Empty Quarter, which borders its western side. The mountain of Jabal al Kawr marks its eastern boundary with the Dakhiliyah Governorate, while the Wusta Governorate lies to the south.

The Dhahirah Governorate has three *wilayats* – Ibri (the main *wilayat*), Yanqul and Dhank – and a 2010 population of 151,664, according to the Census of Population, Housing and Establishments, which had grown to 191,860 in the June 2015 statistics of the National Centre for Statistics and Information.

Its most distinctive features include a high level of agricultural production and a location at the crossroads of the centuries-old trans-Arabian caravan routes. It also has several oil and gas fields and has benefited liberally from substantial development projects. Its Municipal Council has 10 members.

The Dhahirah.. a tourist destination of great promise.



The Dhahirah Governorate is richly endowed with agricultural resources, history and tourist potential, and during the years of Oman's modern Renaissance it has achieved impressive development in every sphere.



The Wusta Governorate

The Wusta Governorate lies to the south of the Dakhiliyah and Dhahirah Governorates. It overlooks the Arabian Sea to the east and borders the desert of the Rub' al Khali, or Empty Quarter, to the west and the Dhofar Governorate to the south. Its most distinctive features include a large number of oil and gas fields and a temperate climate throughout the year.

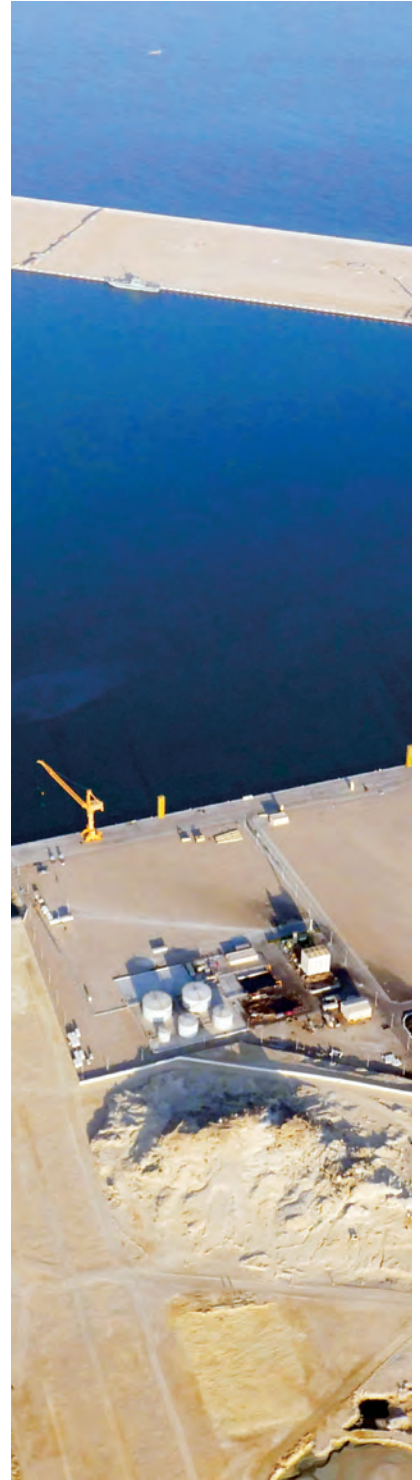
The Wusta comprises four *wilayats* – Haima (the main hub), Mahawt, Duqm and al Jazer – and had a population in 2010 of 42,111 according to the 2010 Census of Population, Housing and Establishments. However, this had declined somewhat to 41,060 by June 2015, according to the statistics of the National Centre for Statistics and Information. Its Municipal Council has eight members.

Duqm's Special Economic Zone (SEZAD) is one of the governorate's most ambitious projects. It is a multi-purpose economic interface of global proportions and key regional hub, assisted by Duqm's strategic geopolitical aspect, open to the Arabian Sea. Duqm has benefited significantly from development in recent years and now occupies a special position on the global investment map, given its competitive edge and the many incentives and facilities afforded investors.

The dry dock complex in the Duqm Economic Zone, meanwhile, reflects the government's strategy to develop the Wusta Governorate into becoming a major contributor to the national economy and promoter of the Sultanate's standing internationally.

In addition to this complex, many projects of water, electricity, roads, fishing jetties and health and educational services have been introduced.

Its Municipal Council has 8 members.



The Wusta's most distinctive features include a large number of oil and gas fields and a temperate climate throughout the year.



The Wustaa.. economic renaissance pays dividends to the national economy.

HISTORY

History and cultural exchanges:

From earliest times, Oman has been a dynamic hub of cultural interaction with sister civilisations. It was a crucial pivot point between East and West on the illustrious Silk Road, a thriving commercial and maritime centre on the fringe of the Indian Ocean up to the second half of the nineteenth century. It proceeded then to extend ties to the various emerging world powers, contributing significantly to remarkable events in and around the Gulf region, the broader Arab world, and the global arena beyond that, always as a focus of civilisation and connection with other peoples and nations.

Historical studies have explored the many links between Oman and the civilisations of the ancient East, with China, India and Mesopotamia, as well as with the eastern Mediterranean, Nile Valley and North Africa.

Excavations conducted in Sohar confirm that mining and copper smelting were among the principal industries of Oman for two millennia BC. It is confirmed, moreover, that the state of Magan referred to in the recordings of the ancient Sumerians was none other than the land of Oman. The *laban*, or gum arabic, gifted by the Queen of Sheba to the Prophet Solomon, came from the Governorate of Dhofar.

Oman has given birth to a succession of stable agrarian or maritime societies, from as far back as the fourth millennium BC, according to some historians. In the historical narrative, two fleeing Arab tribes entered Oman in the second century BC: the Yemeni, who crossed from the southwest of the Arabian Peninsula, and the Nizar, who emerged from the Nejd. The collapse of the Maa'rib dam in 120 AD precipitated a series of Arab tribal migrations into Oman, led by the Azd under Malek bin Fahm Al Azdi, to whom the later ruling family of Al Busaidi belonged.

Oman's modern Renaissance started on 23rd July, 1970. The Renaissance has been built on strong foundations to develop into a unique experience,



Oman has contributed significantly to remarkable events in and around the Gulf region, the broader Arab world, and the global arena beyond that, always as a focus of civilisation and connection with other peoples and nations.



which links the nation's glorious past to its present in order to ensure a bright future. Its strength lies in its enlightened leadership, the loyalty of the people, and the important location of the country. These factors are intimately intertwined, and have ensured that the culture of Oman is dynamic and continues now as it did in the past and will continue with renewed determination into the future.

The names of Oman

Oman was known by different names at different points in history. These names include Majan, Mazoon, and Uman. Each of these names is linked to a specific civilisation or period in Oman's history. The name Majan is associated with the culture of ship-building and copper smelting described in surviving records of the Sumerian language. The ancient Sumerians had commercial and maritime links with Oman, which they referred to as

A fort bears witness to the contribution of Omani civilization to the march of human history.



**Al-Baleed
Archaeological Park
- the north-eastern
portion of the Iron Age
fortress.**

the Land of Majan. The name Mazoon means a place of abundant water resources. It is related to the Arabic word Muzun, which denotes clouds or abundant, flowing water, and was used to refer to Oman in the past due to the greater abundance of water in Oman than in the neighbouring regions. This fact most likely explains the flourishing of agriculture in ancient Oman and the ensuing stability and civilisation.

One explanation regarding the origin of the name Uman or Omanis is the fact that Arab tribes migrated to the country from a place in Yemen with the same name. An alternative account states that Oman was given this name in reference to Uman, son of Saba, son of Yaqthan, or son of Abraham. Oman was in ancient times home to numerous Arabian tribes, some of which settled in the plains and engaged in hunting and agriculture, and others which settled in the deserts of the interior and engaged in livestock farming.

Contribution to the propagation of Islam:

The arrival of Islam marked an important turning point in the history for Oman. The population responded voluntarily and peacefully to the invitation of the Prophet Muhammad to join the community of the faithful, and went on to play a leading role in the consolidation of the faith and promotion of the banner of Islam in its journeys both East and West.

The collected accounts agree that Mazin bin Ghadhuba was the first

Omani to travel to the city of Madinah to meet the Prophet, to whom he said, "O son of a good and blessed people! Allah has shown the path of righteousness to the people of Oman through your religion. I hail from a country where prosperity and sustenance abound."

The Prophet Muhammad replied, "My religion is the religion of Islam. Allah shall double the prosperity of the people of Oman. May blessings and prosperity be granted to those who believe in me and have seen me; may blessings and prosperity be granted to those who believe in me without having seen me, and to those who haven't seen those who have seen me. Allah shall increase the faith of the Omani people."

Prophet Mohammed dispatched Amr Ibn al Aas to Oman's two kings (Jaifer and Abd, sons of Al Julanda ibn al Mustakbir) advising them to embrace Islam. Oman responded positively under the leadership of the sons of Al Julanda and has ever since become a strong fortress of Islam and helped in the religion's propagation in many regions, particularly in east and central Africa.

The speech delivered by the Caliph Abu Bakr to the Omani delegation that travelled to Madinah under the leadership of `Abd bin Al Julanda after the death of Prophet Muhammad is an important record that tells of the good character and hospitality of the Omani people and their adherence to Islam.

Oman played a leading role in the spread of Islamic civilisation to other parts of the world. Omanis participated in the Arab conquests by land and sea of Iraq, Persia, the Indus valley and other places.

Omanis took Islam to East Africa, China and ports in other parts of Africa and Asia where they engaged in commerce. The Omani people are well known for their adherence to their religion and values. This has created strong bonds between the people, which they are dedicated to preserving.

The Yarubis and the expulsion of the Portuguese

By 1507, the Portuguese had taken control of large sections of the Omani coastline after having faced strong resistance from the Omanis. In spite of the difficult domestic political conditions that prevailed at the time, the Portuguese and other invaders were unable to go further inland from certain coastal areas, and the Omani interior remained a stronghold from which resistance continued. Resistance campaigns were also launched from coastal areas such as Sohar. This was until the Omanis finally put an end to the Portuguese occupation altogether, which had lasted approximately one hundred and fifty years.

The appointment of Nassir bin Murshid as Imam of Oman in 1624 marked the beginning of Ya`rubi rule. Imam Nassir bin Murshid unified the country under his leadership, and so the country was united for the first time after many years of disorder. He established a strong navy which curtailed Portuguese influence and liberated some coastal cities from their grip. His



Oman played a leading role in the spread of Islamic civilisation to other parts of the world. Omanis participated in the Arab conquests by land and sea of Iraq, Persia, the Indus valley and other places.



successor Sultan bin Saif continued this important mission, expelling the Portuguese from all over the country, finally liberating Muscat in 1650. This spelled the demise of Portuguese influence in the Gulf region. The Omanis pursued the Portuguese all the way to the coasts of India and East Africa.

The revival of Oman's ancient glory and the establishment of a modern state

The swearing in of Imam Ahmed bin Said, who was Wali of Sohar, as ruler of Oman ushered in a new era in the history of the country, an era that has passed through many stages of its process up to the present day, a span of more than two hundred and sixty seven years. The selection of the Imam was promoted by an influential stratum of society, who appreciated the positions he had taken and recognised in him the quality of courage that had ensured the successful dispatch of an attempted Persian invasion of Oman.

During the reign of Imam Ahmed bin Said, Oman had for the first time in its history a central government. Imam Ahmed was able to unify the warring tribes and took the steps necessary to lay the foundations for a modern state. This involved establishing an armed force to address the defence needs of Oman, modernising commercial activities and developing a naval fleet. During the reign of Imam Ahmed, Muscat maintained its position as one of the most important trading cities in the region. The Port of Muscat became a major port on the European trade routes. Imam Ahmed revived Oman's prominent role in the region. On one occasion, Imam Ahmed sent a 100-boat force led by the naval cruiser *Al Rahmani* in 1775 to the northern sector of the Gulf to break a siege set by the Persians around the Iraqi city of Basra in response to the call of the Wali of Baghdad. Imam Ahmed's mission was a success.

Arab and European historians agree that a number of factors led to the Omanis playing a leading role in the region. The most significant of these factors was Oman's legacy of centuries of maritime trade, the country's geographical location, and the unique heritage, coupled with the stability that prevailed in Oman at a time when the rest of the Gulf region was gripped by chaos and continuous instability. Imam Ahmed bin Said was a great asset to the nation. He commanded a great degree of self-discipline, steadfastness and the ability to make the right decision at the right time. Imam Ahmed gained the respect of European powers, and their confidence in his leadership attracted foreigners and encouraged them to set up commercial agencies in Omani cities, particularly in Muscat which in 1790 became "one of the most important cities in Asia" according to a report drafted by the British East India Company.

Imam Ahmed bin Said died in 1189 AH/1775 AD in Rustaq, the capital of Oman at that time. He was succeeded by a number of imams and sultans of the Al Busaid Dynasty. The capital city was moved from Rustaq to Muscat by Hamad, the grandson of Imam Ahmed bin Said. He ruled from 1193



During the reign of Imam Ahmed bin Said, Oman had for the first time in its history a central government. Imam Ahmed was able to unify the warring tribes.

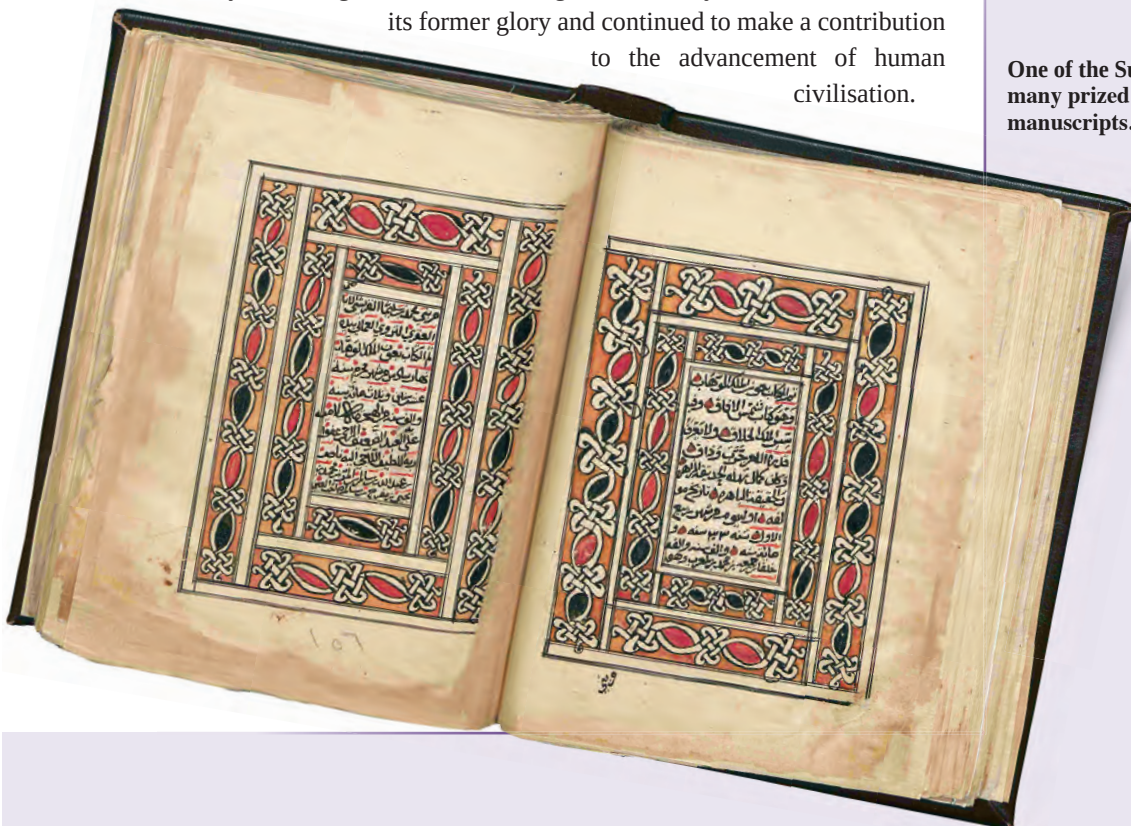


AH/1779 AD to 1207 AH/1792 AD. Muscat has remained the capital of Oman until the present day.

The Omani people have a deep sense of belonging to their land, and a keen awareness of the need for unity in order to confront any challenges the country may face. This sense of unity has been a consistent feature of the Omani national identity throughout the history of Oman. The Al Busaid family's continuous leadership since the mid-18th century until now has played a significant role in contributing to national unity, especially during the reign of Sayyid Said bin Sultan (1807-1856), and during the current reign of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, the builder of Oman's Modern Renaissance.

Although periods of weakness occurred from time to time, the rule of the Al Busaid Dynasty has yielded many great achievements, notably the elimination of foreign occupation and the establishment of an empire which extended to many parts of East Africa during the first half of the 19th century. This empire had a strong maritime presence in the Indian Ocean, leading to the fostering of balanced political relations with major world powers such as Britain, France and the United States. During that time, many domestic and regional challenges were overcome and solid foundations for balanced regional and international relations were established. This enabled the Sultanate to protect its national interests and emerge as a prosperous country which ensures the right of all of its people to equal citizenship. With Oman's unity remaining intact as it had throughout its history, the nation has revived its former glory and continued to make a contribution to the advancement of human civilisation.

One of the Sultanate's many prized manuscripts.







*Stages of the
Leader's Journey*

Stages of the Leader's Journey

At the maturing age of forty five, Oman's modern Renaissance has managed what must have once seemed unimaginable, but which has been achieved as a harvest of conscious, insightful leadership: a state of progress, prosperity and opportunity that has visited its bounty on every Omani citizen. The citizens and government of the Sultanate have today countless reasons, accumulated over two generations, to be proud of that leadership, and to be grateful for its embodiment in His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said.

When he laid the initial groundwork of the great project that has manifested in every part of the country today, HM Sultan Qaboos began a process that has elevated the example of the Sultanate, regionally and globally, to a level that recaptures past eminence and high points in its civilization. He has never, since assuming power on 23 July 1970, paused or hesitated in the clarity and precision of his strategy for the advancement of Omani society, guided by the realities of its local, regional and international context, and by the certainty of what was needed to move forward.

It took vision and presence to see the need for a development infrastructure that would be both stable and sustainable over the long term, and further to see how this might be attained. In the event it was attained through two fundamental and powerful insights. Firstly, it would be necessary to rally and cement a unifying national spirit as a priority; as a binding force around which to build the development endeavour, which would flourish only in a climate of security and stability. This was quickly, and fully, achieved.

The second insight expanded on the first, recognising the need to embrace the citizen as a full partner in the formulation and direction of the development process, so that the process itself might then be able to rely on the wealth of engaged and intelligent human potential to carry it forward.

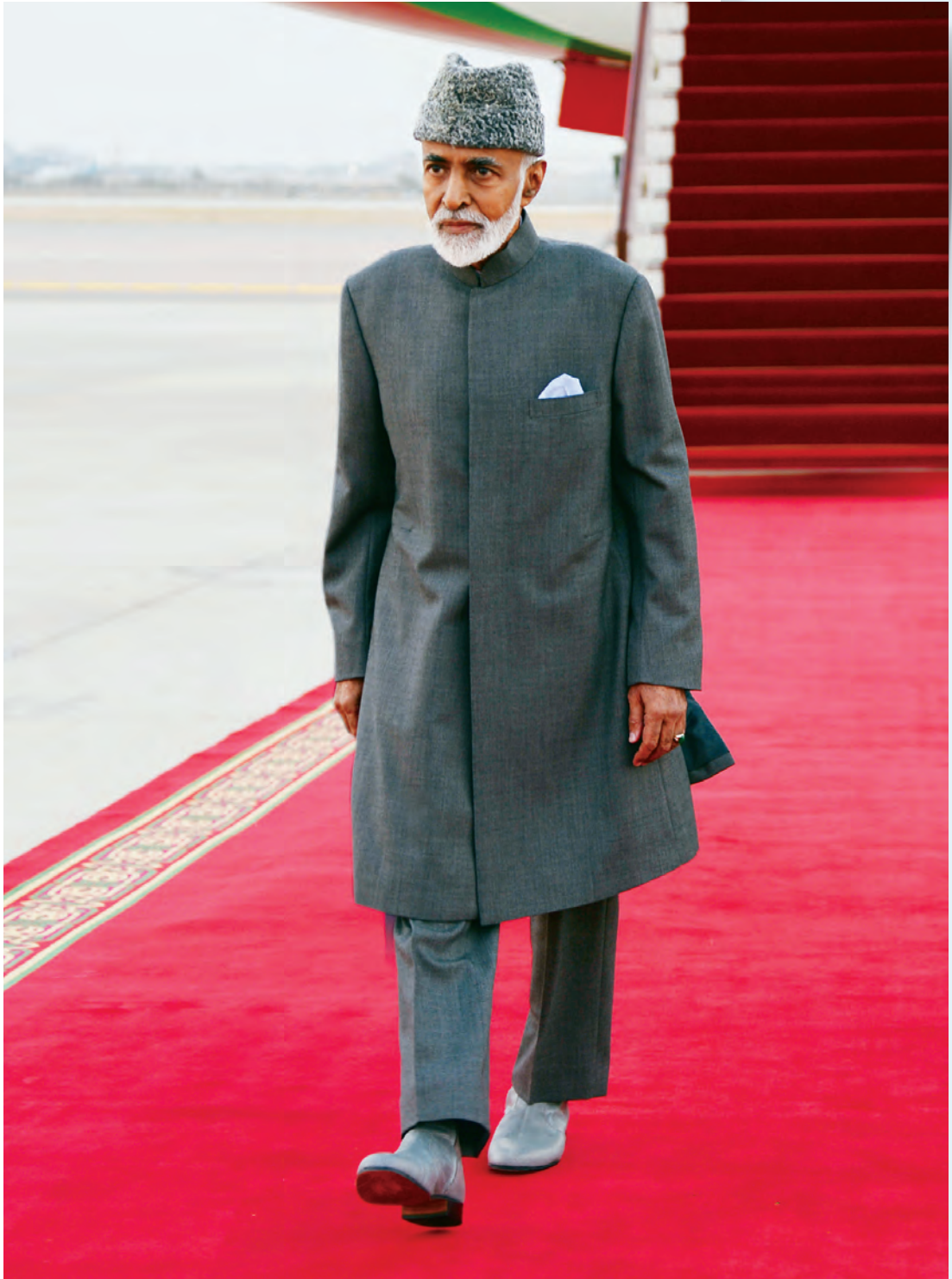
His Majesty's goals were clear from the very outset of the Renaissance. In his historic first address to the people after assuming the reins of government, he alluded to the bright future that awaited the Sultanate, that would restore to it the glory in which it had once revelled, that had marked it out among Arab nations and among the countries of the world; all could be achieved if they would unite as a people and accept his leadership, if they would cooperate to rebuild Oman into the proud nation it once was. *"Our nation was celebrated and strong at one time, and we acted in union and cooperation. We will celebrate this time again, and we will have standing in the Arab world"*.

His Majesty's appeal was met with a strong positive response from the public, who rallied behind his wisdom, and embarked on a journey into the future with vigour and determination, trusting in God to guide them and



Oman's modern Renaissance has managed what must have once seemed unimaginable, but which has been achieved as a harvest of conscious, insightful leadership: a state of progress, prosperity and opportunity that has visited its bounty on every Omani citizen.





HM Sultan Qaboos arrives home in restored health following successful treatment.

to illuminate the path of their inspirational leader. Thus motivated, Sultan Qaboos set about restoring to Oman its rightful place among nations, fulfilling over the years every promise he made to his people and ensuring that their aspirations were fully met.

The cohesion and solidarity between government and people which has been the hallmark of Oman's Renaissance and which ensured its success was again the theme of His Majesty's address to his people four days later, arriving in Muscat for the first time after assuming power: *"The government and people are as a single entity. If one limb declines to carry its weight of responsibility, it has failed the rest. We hope that you will not find us wanting, as indeed we hope that we can in turn depend on your goodwill."*

His Majesty has never lost sight of the importance of this cooperation between people and government; of the importance of respecting the public response to government policies and the government response to the real needs of the people. Each directs and supports the other in the advancement of their mutual goals; together they can motivate one another to better performance of their respective roles, enacted in sincerity and with dedication. It is this approach that has enabled the Omani Renaissance to achieve so successfully its goals.

Sultan Qaboos, by his skill and wisdom, fulfilled his dream of sealing national unity and his vision for Oman infused its citizens with a renewed spirit of solidarity and cohesion, inspiring the men and women of post-Renaissance Oman to express their full potential in rebuilding their country and planning for the future.

The construction of the new Oman began at once, in the summer of 1970, and spread quickly to embrace all provinces and all areas of life. The overriding objective, to provide a decent life for all Omanis, thereby fulfilling the pledge made by His Majesty in his very first addresses to the nation, was ever present. The overall vision of development was comprehensive and designed to meet fundamental present and future needs; to mobilise the energies of the nation towards dynamic participation in the formulation and direction of the national development effort, in a timely and effective manner, as the endeavour proceeded. *"I will work as quickly as possible"*, His Majesty had promised, *"so that you may live happily in a brighter future"*. Today, the country enjoys an unprecedented level of progress and prosperity, and, yes, it has been a gigantic endeavour, and a phenomenal success at every level, and by any standards; and not only because it has mobilised the active participation of citizens in every governorate of the Sultanate, but also because it set the Omani citizen at the very heart of the process, as both the creator and beneficiary of development. The citizen is its instrument and its means, and insofar as the instrument is apt and effective, so has been, and will continue to be, the process itself.

The progressive advance of Omani society is the outcome of a vision in which every citizen is offered the opportunity to develop his or her abilities, to unlock his or her potential and creativity in their chosen field of endeavour. This has been the constant in every policy and concern of His Majesty, the



The Sultan's mature and sharp perception of what was at stake saw beyond the obstacles, recognising the presence of a unified core capable of steering the development process and protecting its achievements.



focus that has commanded the bulk of his attention as the Renaissance passed through its various stages. He promised every Omani a better life and a decent living; pledged to overcome all obstacles that stood in the way of their hopes and aspirations so that present and future generations might stand proudly in the buoyant atmosphere of an Oman awakened to new confidence, and to the bright potential of unlimited opportunity.

Since his historic first address to the nation in 1970, His Majesty has seen this dream manifest, has watched as a newly confident nation sought and achieved ever more progressive ambitions, broader in their compass and loftier in their reach. There can be no greater validation for a philosophy which His Majesty holds closest of all to his heart, or clearer evidence that men and women are indeed at the heart of the narrative of progress. The process of nation-building is above all a human process, and one that must be built from the foundation up. *“And this foundation is the Omani people. We chose the most difficult of routes to emerge from isolation; we walked the path of pride and dignity, while owning the responsibility to protect our people from disruption and loss; to revive and restore their memory of glory and fortify their connection to the land, so that they might sense the depth and extent of the bond of nationality and the close affinity of the men and women of Oman to their beloved land”.*

While he did not conceal or deny either the social fragmentation or geographical dispersal that characterised the Sultanate at that time, a consequence of many political and social factors, the young Sultan’s mature and sharp perception of what was at stake saw beyond the obstacles, recognising the presence of a unified core capable of steering the development process and protecting its achievements. Its permanence and continuity could be protected, and enabled to deal with the vagaries of the external environment, and a confident Oman could re-emerge that would stand proud among the nations of the world.

As the tidal wave of development washed over the country, extending to its furthest corners, to every province and *wilayat*, His Majesty personally oversaw the launch of countless projects, followed up the introduction of new services at first hand, to ensure that they met the exacting standards demanded by the Renaissance; that they would serve the desired objectives and goals. Major construction works accompanied the expansion of education, healthcare, housing. In the first year of the Renaissance alone, 15 new schools were completed, six hospitals and dozens of health centres. Into these schools poured thousands of students. Free medical education services were launched and made available to all citizens. New residential complexes were built, new cities, such as Medinat Qaboos, sprang up, and a transition from outdated and inadequate dwelling and other structures to modern, stylish buildings equipped with all amenities began.

On 9 September 1973, Sultan Qaboos, inaugurating the Ministries district, expanded on the direction and objectives of the Omani renaissance and on their solemn underlying purpose: *“The Omani citizen is entitled to a decent and*



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His Majesty takes very seriously his commitment to the many projects and services initiated under his leadership and patronage. To ensure that all initiatives meet the ambitious and exacting standards worthy of their place in the modern Renaissance he founded in 1970, he attends many project launches and official openings.

confident life on the soil of his/her homeland, secure in the assurance of dignity through social justice, as exemplified in the tolerant teachings of Islam.”

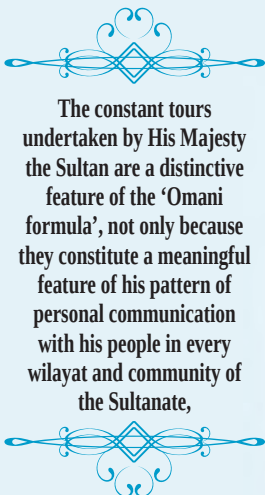
As the succession of projects manifested across Oman and the Sultanate emerged to face the world with a growing sense of international presence, it became necessary to build an airport that would accommodate modern traffic. The new facility would replace the antiquated Bait al-Falaj airstrip, with its narrow unpaved runway, that had served Oman since 1929. Not only were the facilities of the old airport limited, the new facility would be Oman’s principal window on the world, and the world’s window on the new Oman, on its newfound optimism and hopes for the future, “a bridge,” as His Majesty put it, “confirming the flowering that marks this phase of our country’s history.”

And so, on 23 December 1973, Seeb International Airport (Muscat International Airport currently) was formally inaugurated. Appropriately, given his personal patronage of this massive project, His Majesty’s plane was the first to land on its pristine runway. The Sultanate’s skies were now open to the safe arrival of bigger and faster aircraft and the airport quickly earned a reputation as a high-efficiency transport hub. The Sultanate was soon affiliated to the International Civil Aviation Authority and the Arab Civil Aviation Organisation, and soon after that became a member of the World Meteorological Organisation.

The expansion of Oman’s air connections was followed within a year by the inauguration of Sultan Qaboos Port on 20 November 1974, another beneficiary of His Majesty’s patronage. The Port was to be Oman’s sea portal and testament to the advanced level of progress attained in a short few years by the Sultanate. Port Sultan Qaboos is distinguished by its prime location, reflecting the strategic location of the Sultanate itself, situated at the crossroads of trade routes between East and West, and overlooking shipping routes between European, Mediterranean and African ports to the west and the eastern ports of the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia.

The constant tours undertaken by His Majesty the Sultan are a distinctive feature of the ‘Omani formula’, not only because they constitute a meaningful feature of his pattern of personal communication with his people in every *wilayat* and community of the Sultanate, but also because they are not limited to mere social exchanges with the citizens of the country about their affairs and circumstances, or to the follow-up of development projects; they have evolved into a key channel by which to encourage citizens to strengthen their participation in the political process and their engagement with projects of economic and social development linked to their own daily needs; and to explain national priorities and mobilise efforts and energies to this end. As such, His Majesty’s tours developed multidimensional economic and political aspects, and have given rise to a multitude of development projects in health, electricity, roads, water and other areas throughout the country.

While the importance of the tours is clearly and directly linked to the person of His Majesty, to the love and loyalty and gratitude with which the



The constant tours undertaken by His Majesty the Sultan are a distinctive feature of the ‘Omani formula’, not only because they constitute a meaningful feature of his pattern of personal communication with his people in every *wilayat* and community of the Sultanate,



His Majesty opens the Ministries area on 9 September 1973.



Sultan Qaboos delivering his address at the opening ceremony of Sultan Qaboos Port in 1974.

people of Oman hold him in their hearts and minds, they are significant too for the views and directives communicated by His Majesty to those he meets, and for the matters of one kind or another brought to his attention. The conversations are a powerful and influential medium by which His Majesty can convey his vision for Oman, in all of its breadth and detail, directly to the hearts and minds of its citizens.

His Majesty encounters on his tours dignitaries and sheikhs and supporters and members of the general public, and with these diverse groups he discusses important issues of the individual, the community and the nation. He hears their concerns and suggestions, makes decisions to resolve problems voiced, or to facilitate the implementation of projects, or to announce supplementary programmes to overcome shortfalls in the province in question. He explains projects of national scale and what the State is doing about them. To this end, he is accompanied on tour by government ministers or advisers, or members of the State Council or Shura Council, who participate in his meetings with citizens and local dignitaries. It is a form of dialogue that fuses all segments of society, draws together individual visions and brings depth and fresh momentum to exchanges. The driving motivation, as always, is to propel forward the process of development towards fulfilment of its specific priorities, with the greatest possible participation of all of the citizens of the country.

Young people are the backbone of a nation and of its future, and Sultan Qaboos demonstrated an acute awareness of this from the earliest days of the



Sultan Qaboos demonstrated an acute awareness of young people being the backbone of a nation from the earliest days of the Renaissance. As a young ruler new to office himself, he understood that the rebirth of the nation was closely linked to an active and engaged presence of youth in the process.



Renaissance. As a young ruler new to office himself, he understood that the rebirth of the nation was closely linked to an active and engaged presence of youth in the process. An early outcome of this understanding was the establishment of the Higher Council for Youth Welfare and celebration of Youth Years in the 1980s and 1990s. Successive governments introduced programmes aimed at supporting young people and providing them with opportunities to train and qualify and sharpen their ideas and aspirations. The National Youth Commission was founded in response to Royal Decree No. 117/2011 and 26 October was designated Omani Youth Day annually. All of these initiatives reflect His Majesty's dedication to the mission of encouraging youth to excel and to celebrate publicly this upward journey, and not merely in acknowledgement of feats accomplished, but with a view to orienting the journey towards an ever brighter and more accomplished future.

Marking the 12th anniversary of Oman's modern Renaissance on 18 November 1982 as he laid the foundation stone of Sultan Qaboos University, His Majesty spoke stirringly to the nation's youth, of *"this great project, with its many university facilities. We will, moreover, begin work over the coming year, God willing, on the establishment of an integrated sports city. We have founded under our chairmanship a Higher Council for Youth and intend to designate 1983 as Omani Youth Year. We are dedicating our forthcoming National Day to the youth of the nation. All this is to highlight the role of young people and to provide you with every possible opportunity to perform*



The Sultanate is a modern state and in that context its administrative divisions are among its most distinctive features.

According to Royal Decree No. 114/2011, issued on 26th October 2011, Oman comprises 11 governorates.



On his annual tour of the Governorates, Sultan Qaboos gives close attention to the needs and affairs of importance to local citizens.



this role dynamically in every field of endeavour.”

Sultan Qaboos University was formally opened four years later, on 9 November 1986, a glittering crown in the expanding public education system. The Renaissance had already effected a major transformation of primary, secondary and higher education in its many manifestations, under the patronage and guidance of His Majesty. This policy of making education available to every citizen was filling schools in every province, and Sultan Qaboos University was a monument to the success of this investment in human potential. The university has been paying dividends ever since, giving back to the nation yearly regiments of highly qualified and highly motivated graduates with the intelligence and skills to carry Oman forward to an ever brighter future.

Returning to the University for the inauguration of the Sultan Qaboos University Cultural Centre on 18 December 2010, His Majesty's address was again focused on matters of direct concern to his student audience. It was important, he said, to seek out useful knowledge and expertise, to pursue innovation by all means possible, with impassioned minds propelled by experiment, yet balanced by reflection, to sift for what was of value and to leave the trivial behind.

In a charming early recognition of His Majesty's contributions to the progress and welfare of the Omani people, as well as his many regional and international undertakings aimed at bringing peace to political and sectarian adversaries; and not least his championing of the environment and the cause of human rights, a rose was named in his honour in 1990. The 'Sultan Qaboos Rose' or, more formally, the *Rosa Meitixia Sultan Qaboos* was developed by Dutch horticulturalists in the late 1980s and was named for His Majesty by the World Federation of Rose Societies, who formally presented him with a sample of the beautiful red-flowered shrub on Oman's 20th National Day, 18 November 1990.

The 1990s in Oman were marked by an accelerated spurt of progress with respect to the plans of the modern Renaissance. It was a decade that



The university has been paying dividends since it was opened in 1986, giving back to the nation yearly regiments of highly qualified and highly motivated graduates with the intelligence and skills to carry Oman forward to an ever brighter future.



saw the crystallisation and integration of the institutional structure of the modern Omani state, in a manner that enabled it to make new strides in the development of the country's administrative and political framework – executive, parliamentary, judicial and administrative – while the rule of law became an established principle.

The establishment of the Shura (Consultative) Council was the outcome of Royal Decree No. 94/91 of 12 November 1991, as Oman was entering the third decade of the modern renaissance. The Shura Council was an advance on its precursor, the State Consultative Council, which had served for a decade since 18 October 1981. It also represented a step forward on the journey to full democracy in the Sultanate, as had been outlined by His Majesty in his pledges, as leader, to *“establish a valid basis for true consultation, one that springs from our country's heritage, its Islamic principles and values and its powerful history, while selecting the methods and tools of our time as appropriate.”* Embedded in this understanding is the recognition that

Unveiling the memorial plaque at the opening ceremony of Sultan Qaboos University in 1986.



His Majesty leads prayers at the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque on its opening day in May 2001.

consultation, justice, equality and participation in public affairs are the essential components of the Sultanate's system of government.

An outstanding feature of the 1990s was the publication of the Basic Law of the State, pursuant to Royal Decree 101/96 of 6 November 1996. The Basic Law fixed and consolidated the future disposition of Omani policy at every level, by its clear, specific and integrated legal framework. From this basis began the re-drafting and restructuring of the various organs of Omani society, including the judiciary, as well as the laws and principles governing the conduct of State and society, in the new context of the Basic Law. The new context would have to accommodate the developments that had taken place since 1970 impacting both the State and society, and move forward in a manner that would support the expanded aspirations of the Omani people. It would have to co-exist with a higher degree of economic and social progress and with the active participation of citizens in the making of decisions affecting them and their future.



The story of the Omani people has deep roots, and a broad reach. They were engaged with the development of Islamic civilization from its earliest days and their own social and cultural development drew much from the spirit of Islam. When Sultan Qaboos ordered the construction of the Sultan Qaboos Mosque, at his own expense, in 1992, his intention was that it would become an important centre for Islamic Studies, a fountain of knowledge of Islam's true nature, a school for the training of preachers, thinkers and disseminators of the true religion, and a platform for humanitarian and culturally-based communication that emphasised the tolerance of Islam and its spiritual appeal to goodness, love and peace.

The Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque, which was formally opened by His Majesty on 4 May 2001, is a magnificent architectural homage to the impact and influence of the great civilizations of the East, as evident in the beauty of the design and intricacy of its embellishment, the whole managing to inspire both awe and harmony at the same time.

Rarely has a peace honour been as well deserved and applauded as that awarded to Sultan Qaboos in 1998 by a group of 33 leading American universities, research centres and organisations. The International Peace Award, bearing the seal of prominent, established academic institutions, while it recognised the remarkable support His Majesty enjoyed at home, at both government and popular level, after 28 years in power, acknowledged in particular the broader horizons of that support, in the respect with which his intellectual and political abilities are held and in the influence he commands internationally.

In order to achieve diversification of the Sultanate's sources of national income and to broaden the country's production base, His Majesty looked to the industrial sector for its development potential, since industry constitutes the most reliable route to meeting long-term economic objectives. It has most to offer in terms of the range of possible revenue-producing activities and



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of enhancing the business environment in the Sultanate, while creating job opportunities from local enterprise and exploiting local raw materials.

The government's interest in the manufacturing sector became a material reality with the creation of the Sultanate's first dedicated manufacturing district, the Rusayl Industrial Zone, in Muscat Governorate. An additional priority with this endeavour was the generation of employment opportunities for young school-leavers and graduates. Rusayl was the first of many such schemes, in Sohar, Governorate of Batinah North, in Raysut, Governorate of Dhofar, in Nizwa, Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah, in Sur, Governorate of Al Sharqiyah South, in Buraymi, Governorate of Al Buraymi, and an addition to the Sumail Industrial Zone, which was announced in 2010.

The development of Oman's seaports has followed an integrated pattern, itself the product of a specific vision of His Majesty to capitalise on the respective potential and advantages of the Sultanates' several ports. This vision translated into a major scheme to develop and modernise port infrastructure at Salalah Port and install a container handling terminal of international scale. The new facility was formally opened in November 1998, and proved to be one of the country's strategic projects of prime economic significance. It represented a quantum leap for the Sultanate in terms of its maritime transport presence. Dhofarenjoys an unrivalled position on the world navigation map, situated as it is at the crossroads of East-West shipping routes. Salalah Port has been listed among the 20 most pivotal port destinations for container transfer worldwide and is equipped to handle giant container ships.

The expansion of Sohar Port was initiated in October 1999, an ambitious scheme that carried the aspirations of the Sultanate into the new millennium. Another product of His Majesty's differentiation policy was the conversion of Sultan Qaboos Port from its commercial brief to become a designated tourist sea portal. As a result of this 16 July 2011 edict, all of the port's import and export business activities (general cargo, containers) have been moved to Sohar.

Qalhat in Al Sharqiyah's *wilayat* of Sur specialises in the export of natural gas and LNG. It came into existence on 6 April 2000 as a crucial addition to the Sultanate's list of dedicated ports. Liquefied natural gas has been a cornerstone of Oman's development vision, and a mainstay of the country's diversification programme to reduce dependency on oil.

The Duqm Special Economic Zone, which was established by Royal Decree No. 119/2011 of 26 October 2011, is further evidence of His Majesty's constant focus on enhancing the performance of the national economy, and distributing the fruits of development equably to the various governorates, always by reference to their particular advantages, geographical location and capacity to contribute to the national economy.

While encouraging the various productive sectors to greater effectiveness in their contributions to the process of renewal, and with a view to achieving sustainable development based on economic diversification and the optimal use of human and natural resources, His Majesty has continued to monitor



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the Sultanate's progress towards its destiny as a full State of Institutions. The integration and consolidation of the modern institutional structure proceeds apace in a manner that sees increasing confidence in the separate institutions (executive, legislative, judicial and service), working independently, but in harmony. This process has been accompanied by the process of expanding the public role in decision-making and nation-building. The journey to progress and prosperity will have arrived at its destination when all institutions of State are working in full coherence and compatibility, so no impediment will be left to attainment of the goals set for the country by wise leadership acting in accord with priorities that put nation and people first at all times.

Examples of how the various threads of an ever more complex government fabric are woven together are too numerous to mention here, from interactions at executive, legislative and service levels to the community democracy managed by local councils throughout the provinces, to the joint meetings between the branches of *Majlis* Oman (the Council of State and the Shura) and the Council of Ministers, and the protocol by which they coordinate their affairs. It is a fabric to which His Majesty has given decades of careful reflection, and which has the ultimate purpose of ensuring justice and cohesion among the people of this good land.

One of the most valuable products of the Renaissance, arriving as validation that the public's fundamental needs (education, healthcare, employment) had been fulfilled and surpassed, was a rising level of cultural sophistication

Sohar port .. one for the new millennium.



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His Majesty officially opens the Royal Opera House in Muscat in 2011.



The Royal Opera House in Muscat was an outcome of this broad understanding, founded to become a showcase of the highest endeavours, local, regional and international, in the performance arts; celebrating creativity in its many splendid forms and accessible as an inspiration to all.



in Omani society. His Majesty has championed, in his own life and in his public policies, the value of expanded awareness in bridging the gap between cultures. The Royal Opera House in Muscat was an outcome of this broad understanding, founded to become a showcase of the highest endeavours, local, regional and international, in the performance arts; celebrating creativity in its many splendid forms and accessible as an inspiration to all.

The Royal Opera House Muscat was inaugurated by His Majesty on 12 October 2011 and ushered in a new era in the endeavour to expand both appreciation of the Sultanate's and region's traditional arts and of the contributions, traditional and modern, of other cultures around the world. It is such fusion that opens the door to new universes in creativity and the Royal Opera House Muscat has hosted many sublime performances and concerts in the four years of its existence and stands as a modern landmark to Oman's longstanding cultural curiosity and hospitality.

Sultan Qaboos pledged to restore Oman to its historical position among nations. Since he made that pledge, the Sultanate has found its standing once again. It has owned its historical experience, retained its special character and identity and revived its heritage and traditions. It has honoured its role, actively and effectively, in addressing the issues and preoccupations of concern to the peoples of the Gulf, Arab and international arenas, and it has in the process earned high praise for its reliability and clarity of view.

The philosophy that has underpinned the Sultanate's ambitious development

project is one based on the premise of His Majesty that *“every citizen of this country is equal; there is no difference between small or great, rich or poor. Equality dictates that all are brothers and sisters under the umbrella of Islam’s social justice system; all distinction and differentiation must be as a function of sincerity and competence in the generous work of development and all are invited to compete freely in the service of our beloved homeland.”*

Sultan Qaboos succeeded in rallying the citizens of the country as one, in bringing all in from the fringes to share a common vision. He urged them gently to embrace creativity, innovation and the long view, and set human development as a priority in many contexts of the national project: among them social development, social unity, the fostering of collaboration and cohesion and solidarity and effective participation between government and public. All should be enabled to play their part in securing the comprehensive development of Oman, of every city and village from mountain to plain. This vision became a reality by a process of judicious leadership, and reached a level of creativity and innovation which in turn contributed significantly to the formulation of new visions and new ideas that raised the standing of Oman at home and abroad.

The sincere mutual affection that has defined the relationship between Sultan Qaboos and the citizens of Oman for four and a half decades is an outstanding feature of this narrative of benevolent leadership and loyal citizenship, even of the modern Renaissance itself. Small wonder, then, the outpouring of jubilation that overtook the nation as men women and children brought the nation to a halt on 23 March 2015 to welcome home His Majesty, returning from treatment overseas in the full glow of restored health. It was an emotional time, unfettered and true, and it swept the country from its farthest extremities to its very heart.

His Majesty’s much awaited return brought to consciousness as never before the depth and warmth of the bond that exists between Sultan Qaboos and his people. Omanis, whether at home or abroad, hold this bond close. It is a special and unique relationship, and the safe return of His Majesty offered an occasion for Omanis to give public expression to their love, loyalty, pride and gratitude - to their leader, the founder and symbol of their country’s rebirth.

The cascade of humanity that poured onto the streets of every city, town and village of Oman was a living, breathing harvest of the Renaissance that began 45 years ago, the joyful manifestation of the pledges made by His Majesty when he saw a future populated by happy, healthy citizens, gainfully employed, proud of their country and confident in their own achievements.

The Museum of Oman through the Ages, the foundation stone of which was laid in the *wilayat* of Manah in the Dakhiliyah on 14 July 2015, will be a fitting monument to the towering achievements of the modern Renaissance and to a history with deep roots, but also to the God-given majesty and diversity of the Sultanate itself. The Museum, which enjoys the personal patronage of His Majesty, will document in audio-visual format the full extent of this long, colourful and glorious journey.



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The museum is an investment in Oman's undimmed fascination with its heritage, and will offer visitors a glimpse under one roof of the pageant of the Sultanate's progression from ancient settlement across the millennia to the high tech present; all set against the resplendent backdrop of its natural landscape. The displays will be interactive, using the latest technology in the field. The museum designers were anxious to create an experience that highlighted the long chronology – Oman Through the Ages – but that was also substantive, so that it would have educational value as well as being a recreational experience for the casual visitor. It is an ambitious project with lofty goals, and these will be reflected in the wealth of its displays. Its siting in the Governorate of Al Dakhiliya is in recognition of the province's long and substantial contribution to Oman's history and of the wealth of its artistic and social heritage.

The spirit of the Dakhiliyah was sturdy and unyielding, its foundation rooted in pragmatic dreams of prosperity for Oman, and the Sultanate's foreign relations were characterised by prudence and wisdom, and poise in dealing with unexpected political events.

That spirit was revived and nourished in the modern Renaissance, since it resonated with the deepest convictions of its founder and leader, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said. It is enshrined in the strong yet steady current that runs through all of Oman's dealings with the world today, through its interactions with international organisations and agencies; firm in its determination to maintain the optimal climate for development and peace at home and for security in the region and beyond.

Sultan Qaboos outlined the consistent principles that would guide Oman's foreign policy at the very outset of the modern Renaissance. Oman's interactions would be based on *"a policy of cordial relations with our neighbours, of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states; we*





*will strengthen our relations with the Arab countries and establish friendly relations with the nations of the world. We will stand by the Arab cause in the international context, and stand by the African cause and support the struggle of African peoples for freedom and independence".*The Sultanate extended the hand of friendship to all nations, advocated consistently a policy of understanding between peoples; and in doing so, it has earned the world's respect and appreciation, and become a leader by example in the conduct of international relations. Its outstanding characteristics have been its intelligent discernment and fair dealing in all exchanges; and above all, its courage in taking clear decisions and seeing them through to conclusion.

The Sultanate participated in the founding of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) and supported it in its initial steps. It contributed to the steadying and strengthening of its role and urged it to achieve noble goals for the peoples of the region, so that they might reasonably anticipate brighter and happier prospects for themselves and a secure

An outpouring of joy swept towns and villages across the nation as His Majesty returned to the homeland following successful medical treatment abroad.

environment into the future. It supported the shared Arab endeavour from the moment of its accession to membership of the League of Arab States on 29 September 1971. A month later, on 7 October 1971, the Sultanate became a member of the United Nations and it has honoured its place among nations by a pattern of responsible and active service to international justice, to the resolution of complex issues, and to the attainment of peace and security wherever it is lacking in the world.

The principles of Oman's foreign policy derive from the rational perspective of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said. His evaluation of issues and events is mature and impartial; faced with a challenge that threatens to metamorphose into an impasse, he eschews the impatient, emotional response. He approaches all crises in this way, whether local, regional or international, with the calm assurance that reason can be brought to prevail.

The 'Omani approach' has its roots in the Sultanate's own cultural heritage, which has always valued tolerance, communication and acceptance of the other, which respects others and acknowledges freely their rights. It is consistent, drawing inspiration from the compassionate, tolerant and accepting message of Islam, from its wisdom and discernment. This is the bedrock of Oman's dynamic yet constant approach to problem-solving, an approach that has enabled it to navigate the stormy waters of regional and global politics, and the earth-shaking events that subverted the global economic system in recent times. The 'Omani approach' earned its credibility in the fraught arenas of international politics. Its positive effects have rippled through conflicts and stalemates in the region and beyond and Oman can today claim strong and well-established relationships with many countries, based on common interests. No territorial disputes diminish the warmth of its relations with neighbouring states. In a world wracked by conflict and aggression, this is a brave and uniquely progressive stance.

The Omani experience proves beyond doubt that those who dedicate themselves to the pursuit of stability, justice and lasting peace must first demonstrate their own commitment to the values of tolerance in relations between States. His Majesty Sultan Qaboos has been a prominent advocate of peace, of the philosophy that *"establishing and maintaining peace in the world is essential for the good of all humanity, and this peace cannot be maintained unless based on well-found rules of justice and principles of cooperation and understanding among all nations."*

Navigating the journey to peace is a task which the Omani perspective is uniquely equipped to handle. It is a work that requires a higher, more strategic, frame of reference, such as that espoused by His Majesty. It comes from a place of deep awareness and is a profoundly civilized response to the frailties that drive human conflict. This is the policy that has not failed Oman since the launch of its Renaissance and that it has promoted at every opportunity, both in its own affairs and beyond its borders: peaceful coexistence, good neighbourly relations, non-interference, respect for others and for national sovereignty. This is the Omani formula, the recipe for genuine peace.



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In 2007, Sultan Qaboos was awarded both the Peace Prize of the Russian International Association and the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding in recognition of his outstanding services to peace. The following year he was chosen, with Arab, Islamic and international endorsement, by the World Establishment for Press, Publishing and Distribution (WEPPD) as Personality of the Year 2008 for Justice and Humanity. The Sultanate repeatedly heads the list of countries polled for security indicators by international organisations, institutions and agencies. The study entitled 'Tolerance', published in Moscow bilingually in Russian and Arabic, addresses in some detail the Sultanate's contribution in this respect and the impact brought to bear by policies steeped in tolerance on the process of building mutual understanding. This is Oman's message, the deceptively simple, yet enormously powerful, universal message of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos. It bears the seal of history, of Islam, of a philosophy that is unassuming, inclusive, universal and humane.

It is no coincidence that the Sultanate should have become a refuge and place of trust for all who seek discretion and wisdom in their differences. Its open door, its willingness to weigh facts impartially, its credibility as an arbiter and its peaceful intent make it a sanctuary where those seeking guidance know that the evaluation will be just but not judgmental and that the objective will always be to find the fairest route to consensus, or compromise or, in its finest hour, full reconciliation.

His Majesty's contributions to peace and his regional and international standing have been acknowledged by way of several international peace awards.

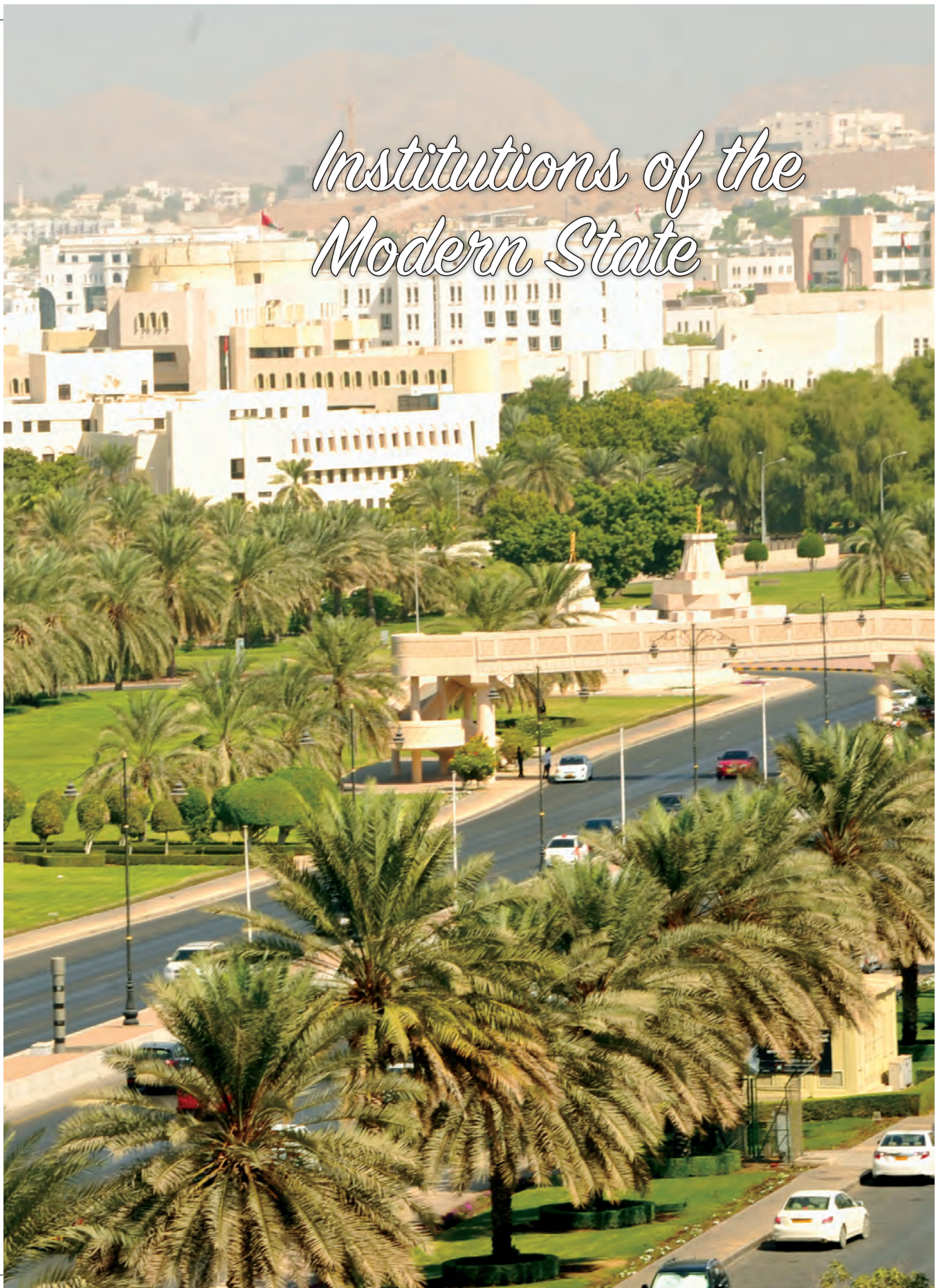


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Institutions of the Modern State



Institutions of the Modern State

Basic Law of the State and its Organisational Structure

The objective of building a modern state and establishing the State of Modern Institutions has continued to be one of the basic pillars of the national development efforts of the past 45 years. The process has unfolded under the visionary oversight of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, who laid down solid foundations for the modern state, so that this state might keep abreast with the age in the fields of science and knowledge, while at the same time preserving its identity and its originality.

The significance of what has been achieved in terms of the establishment and advancement of a modern State of Institutions was the result of a comprehensive vision, executed through careful planning and leadership. Citizenship was at all times based on equality between citizens, and the rule of law was a fundamental right extended to all citizens of the country.

This principle was ultimately enshrined in the Basic Law of the State, issued on 11th June 1996, and its amendments. The Basic Law is a charter that enunciates all fundamental aspects of the modern state, the relations between its institutions and the responsibilities, rights, duties and tasks entrusted to the various organs of the State: administrative, executive, parliamentary and judicial. It ensures that each of these organs executes its national duties in a manner that supports harmony and integration between the Council of Ministers and the Council of Oman and its affiliated bodies: the Council of State and the Shura Council. It supports the independence of the judiciary in its mission to achieve justice by monitoring its performance to ensure that it does not deviate from the narrow path; as expressed through the work of the State Financial and Administrative Audit Institution, the Public Authority for Consumer Protection, and other regulatory bodies which exercise their roles under the umbrella of this law. The associated obligations serve to secure and guarantee the basic freedoms of citizens, protected by law.

The Basic Law of the State

In confirmation of the principles that have guided state policy in various fields over the past decade; of the determination to continue the effort to build a future that will deliver further achievements benefiting homeland and citizens and enhance the positive international status enjoyed by Oman and



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the role it has assumed successfully in promoting peace, security, justice and cooperation between the various nations and peoples; the Basic Law of the State, constitutes a strong foundation from which the Sultanate proceeds towards the achievement of greater progress, prosperity and stability. It constitutes the basis for the participation of the nation's citizens in the development process at different levels.

The Basic Law is the legal framework within which society operates and from which the state's bodies derive the essence of their role, to which they resort as a frame of reference and a source of adjudication. Therefore, it was no coincidence that this statute was issued after a quarter century of work, and concerted efforts had been made to legalise many of the actions of society so that this Basic Law responds to the aspirations of citizens and meets the requirements of the next stage of national development, and so that it can answer all queries clearly, accurately and impartially.

The Basic Law of the State consists of 81 articles falling in seven parts. This historic document defines the system of government in the state and the principles guiding the state's policies at various levels. It specifies the public rights and duties of citizens and gives details of the provisions concerning the Head of State, the Council of Ministers and the judiciary. It also refers to the specialized councils, the financial affairs and the Council of Oman (*Majlis Oman*). While laws must be issued on the basis of provisions of the Basic Law of the State, these laws should not conflict with the Basic Law's provisions.

In confirmation of the participation of all members of society in the march of comprehensive development towards the desired goals of progress, some of the provisions of the Basic Law were amended for the first time under Royal Decree No 99/2011 on 19th October 2011. The new amendments granted legislative and audit powers and prerogatives to the State Council and the Consultation Council (*Majlis al Shura*) to ensure that both conform to the decisions issued by the Council of Ministers.

The amendments also granted the State Council (*Majlis al Dawla*) and Consultation Council (*Majlis al Shura*) the right to amend all laws proposed by the Council of Ministers before submitting them to His Majesty the Sultan who issues them as enforced laws. The Basic Law's amendments grant the Consultation Council alone the prerogative to propose laws. They also define terms for membership at the State Council and Consultation Council, as well as the number of members in the two councils so that the number of the State Council's members shall not exceed the number of the Consultation Council members.

Firm foundations:

The Basic Law of the State specified a set of firm foundations and specific principles for the State and the system of government. In its first article,



The Basic Law is the legal framework within which society operates and from which the state's bodies derive the essence of their role, to which they resort as a frame of reference and a source of adjudication.



this Basic Law states that the Sultanate of Oman is an independent, fully sovereign, Arab, Islamic State with its capital in the city of Muscat.

Article 2 states that the State's religion is Islam and that Sharia is the basis of legislation.

Part One of the Basic Law of the State also specifies the method and procedures for accession to power. Article 5 stipulates that the system of government is Royal Sultani rule that is hereditary through the male descendents of Sayyid Turki bin Said bin Sultan on condition that the one chosen as successor be a Muslim, judicious, of sound character and a legitimate son of two Omani Muslim parents.

Rule in the Sultanate is assumed in accordance with Article 9 on the basis of justice, consultation and equality. Citizens have a right to participate in public affairs in accordance with the law.

Article 59 stipulates that the sovereignty of law is the basis of government in the State and that the integrity, impartiality and probity of the judiciary shall be a guarantee of rights and freedoms.

The Basic Law of the State also guarantees the independence of the judiciary and makes interference in legal proceedings or the affairs of justice a crime punishable by law.

All aspects of Oman's political system and the way it operates is defined by the Basic Law of the State in its Articles, which guarantee the rights and freedoms of the country's citizens as well as the functions of the State's authorities and institutions.

The Organizational Structure of the State:

The State's organizational structure consists of His Majesty the Sultan and the councils, the institutions and authorities listed below:

First, His Majesty the Sultan:

His Majesty the Sultan is the Head of State, its paramount and final authority and the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. His Majesty's person is inviolate. Respect for him is obligatory and his command must be obeyed. He is the symbol of national unity. He is the country's guardian and defender. Article 42 of the Basic Law of the State defines His Majesty's functions.

Second, the Council of Ministers:

The Council of Ministers assists His Majesty the Sultan in drawing up the general policy of the State. It is the institution entrusted with the implementation of the general policy of the State. In this context, the Council of Ministers undertakes the specific task of submitting recommendations to His Majesty the Sultan about economic, political, social, executive and administrative matters of concern to the government. This includes proposals



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of draft laws, Royal decrees, decisions aimed to promote the welfare of citizens or securing basic services to be rendered to them or raising the economic, health and cultural standards of citizens or determining the general objectives and policies of economic, social and administrative development or proposing suitable means and procedures to implement these policies to guarantee the proper utilization of financial, economic and human resources.

In addition, the Council of Ministers discusses the development plans prepared by the departments concerned and submits them to His Majesty the Sultan for approval. It also discusses the proposals of ministries, each in their areas of discretion, and takes proper decisions on those proposals.

The Council of Ministers supervises the smooth operation of the State's administrative apparatus and follows up the way it performs its duties and coordinates among its units. It is also entrusted with the general supervision of enforcement of laws, Royal Decrees, decisions, regulations, treaties, agreements and court rulings, in addition to other tasks or missions that are delegated to the Council by His Majesty the Sultan or tasks entrusted to it by the power of law. The Council of Ministers has a Secretariat General which helps it perform its functions.

Membership of the Council of Ministers, under the chairmanship of His Majesty the Sultan, is as follows:

His Highness Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers;

His Highness Sayyid Haitham bin Tariq al Said, Minister of Heritage and Culture;

HE Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal bin Saud al Busaidi, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court;

HE General Sultan bin Mohammed al Nu'mani, Minister of the Royal Office;

HE Sayyid Badr bin Saud bin Hareb al Busaidy, Minister Responsible for Defence Affairs;

HE Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal bin Said al Busaidi, Minister of Interior;

HE Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdallah, Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs;

HE Sheikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah bin Ali al Khalili, Minister of Justice;

HE Darwish bin Ismail bin Ali al Balushi, Minister Responsible for Financial Affairs;

HE Sheikh Abdullah bin Mohammed bin Abdullah al Salmi, Minister of Endowments and Religious Affairs;

HE Dr Mohammed bin Hamad bin Saif al Rumhy, Minister of Oil and Gas;

HE Dr Rawiyah bint Saud bin Ahmed al Busaidiyah, Minister of Higher Education;

HE Dr Ali bin Masoud bin Ali al Sunaidy, Minister of Commerce and Industry;

HE Sheikh Saif bin Mohammed al Shabibi, Minister of Housing;

HE Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser al Bakri, Minister of Manpower;



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HE Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed bin Obaid al Saidi, Minister of Health;
HE Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed bin Nasser al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education;

HE Sheikh Al Fahdl bin Mohammed bin Ahmed al Harthy, Secretary General of the Council of Ministers;

HE Ahmed bin Abdullah bin Mohammed al Shuhi, Minister of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources;

HE Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed bin Salem al Futaisi, Minister of Transport and Communications;

HE Sheikh Khalid bin Omar bin Said al Marhoon, Minister of Civil Service;

HE Sheikh Saad bin Mohammed bin Said al Mardhouf al Saadi, Minister of Sports Affairs;

HE Sayyid Saud bin Hilal bin Hamad al Busaidi, Minister of State and Governor of Muscat;

HE Dr Abdullah bin Mohammed bin Said al Sa'eedi, Minister of Legal Affairs;

HE Dr Fuad bin Jaafar bin Mohammed al Sajwani, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries;

HE Mohammed bin Salim bin Said al Toobi, Minister of Environment and Climate Affairs;

HE Sheikh Mohammed bin Said bin Saif al Kalbani, Minister of Social Development;

HE Sayyid Mohammed bin Sultan bin Hamoud al Busaidi, Minister of State and Governor of Dhofar;

HE Ahmed bin Nasser bin Hamad al Mahrazi, Minister of Tourism;

HE Dr Abdulmunim bin Mansoor bin Said al Hasani, Minister of Information.

Three - The Defence Council:

On December 28, 1996, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos issued Royal Decree No 105/96 structuring the Defence Council under His Majesty's chairmanship and with 8 other people selected as members on grounds of their ranks or positions. The Defence Council meets at the direction of His Majesty the Sultan to discuss issues pertaining to the Sultanate's defence and security.

Four - The National Security Council (NSC):

The National Security Council (NSC) is responsible for reviewing all issues related to national security. It convenes under the chairmanship of His Majesty the Sultan in cases deemed appropriate by Sultan Qaboos. Otherwise, the NSC convenes under the auspices of the Minister of the Royal Office. Its members are: The Inspector General of Police and Customs, the Head of the



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Internal Security Service, the Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces and the Chairman of the Communications and Liaison Department. The Council may request the attendance of non-members as and when appropriate. The Council has a Secretary-General who is appointed from the Royal Office staff.

Five - The Financial Affairs and Energy Resources Council:

This Council undertakes the responsibility of drafting the State's fiscal policy and all matters related to its financial and monetary system. It drafts the annual General State Budget and studies financial allocations for development projects, as well as anything related to domestic and external investment, its funding and other savings-related investment, financial and monetary affairs.

The Council's remit also includes the development of energy resources and their contribution to the national economy, as well as improvements to the ways in which the funds they generate are utilized.

The Council, which convenes under the chairmanship of His Majesty the Sultan or its Deputy Chairman, was restructured under His Majesty's chairmanship by Royal Decree No 60/2011, issued on 9th May 2011.

Six - Board of Governors of the Central Bank of Oman:

The Board of Governors of the Central Bank of Oman undertakes the task of drafting a suitable monetary policy for the Sultanate. It also runs the Central Bank of Oman (CBO), which was established on 1st December 1974 as per the provisions of the Banking Law No 7/74, later amended by Royal Decree No 114/2000.

The Board is fully empowered to adopt all necessary measures to ensure that the CBO is properly managed. It also enjoys the full authority to issue currency, monitor the banking institutions and oversee banking operations in the Sultanate.

On 18th June 2012, the CBO Board of Governors was restructured, with His Majesty the Sultan as Chairman and comprises seven governors.

Seven - The Supreme Judicial Council:

In seeking to develop the judiciary and ensure its independence, the Supreme Judicial Council enjoys a wide range of powers and prerogatives including – specifically – drawing up general judicial policy; streamlining and guaranteeing the smooth running of the courts and Public Prosecutor's Office; facilitating the litigation process and access to legal proceedings and considering nominations submitted by the competent authorities for appointments.

Promotions in the judiciary, the Administrative Court and the Public Prosecution, in cases where the law stipulates such posts should be filled by Royal Decree, also fall under this Council's remit. As well as proposing draft



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His Majesty chairs a Cabinet meeting at Bait Al-Barakah on 1 November 2015.

laws on judicial matters and expressing views on draft laws it also gives its opinion on draft judicial co-operation agreements between the Sultanate and other countries, as well as on any other matter His Majesty sees fit to put before it for review.

The Council was restructured on 29th February 2012 pursuant to Royal Decree No. 9/2012, with His Majesty the Sultan as Chairman.

Eight - The Supreme Council for Planning:

The Supreme Council for Planning was promulgated by Royal Decree No. 30/2012, issued on 26th May 2012. The Council drafts strategies and policies necessary for achieving sustainable development in the Sultanate. It also drafts mechanisms for implementing these strategies and policies towards the achievement of economic diversity and ideal utilisation of natural and human resources. The National Centre for Statistics and Information, established under Royal Decree No 31/2012 of 26th May 2012, is affiliated to the Supreme Council for Planning.

The Higher Planning Council has initiated preparatory steps in drafting the future vision for the Omani economy (Oman 2040), acting through its General Secretariat and in coordination with various government agencies and consulting firms, educational institutions, and with the involvement of the respective governorates, the various councils and the private sector. Meanwhile these preparations are being dovetailed with the ongoing preparation of the Ninth Five-Year Plan (2016 -2020).

Nine - Higher Committees, Subsidiary Councils and Public Authorities:

Article No 56 of the Basic Law of the State states that “Specialized Councils shall be established, their powers defined and their members appointed in accordance with Royal Decrees”.

The State’s administrative apparatus comprises a number of Higher Committees, Specialized Subsidiary Councils and Public Authorities, each of which is responsible for managing or overseeing a specific sector with a view to drafting a comprehensive vision for development. In serving the public interest and to guarantee the smooth flow of work in each sector, these bodies coordinate with other relevant departments, including ministries.

The members of these Committees, Councils and Authorities include ministers and public figures according to their specialisation.

The Higher Committee for Conferences:

This Committee is responsible for preparing, monitoring and liaising on conferences attended by Oman – particularly those involving the Gulf Co-operation Council for Arab states – in coordination with the relevant ministries.



The Higher Planning Council has initiated preparatory steps in drafting the future vision for the Omani economy (Oman 2040), acting through its General Secretariat.



The Supreme Higher Committee for Five-Year Plans:

The Supreme Higher Committee for Five-Year Plans specifies the basic elements and guidelines for the five-year development plans. It conducts half-yearly assessments of these plans and follows up their implementation in line with the provisions of Royal Decree No 1/2006. Hence this committee plays a vital role in translating the priorities set out by His Majesty in the current phase of national development, into practical guidelines for the implementation of the Five-Year Plan. It also takes steps to mobilise collective energies and monitor and ensure greater co-ordination between the government, the State Council and the Consultation Council in the achievement of the nation's goals.

The State Financial and Administrative Audit Institution:

The State Financial and Administrative Audit Institution (SFAAI) was established as a financially and administratively independent body on 22nd November 1999. On 27th February 2011, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos gave orders to expand the powers of the State's Audit Institution and amend its name to the State's Financial and Administrative Audit Institution, while at the same time granting its members the quality of 'judicial inspection'.

The State Financial and Administrative Auditing Law was promulgated by Royal Decree No. 111/ 2011 on 24th October 2011, and the Protection of Public Funds and Avoidance of Conflict of Interests Law was issued by Royal Decree No.112/2012 on 26th May 2012.

The function of SAAFI is to protect public funds on behalf of the state, along with the private funds managed, or supervised, by the state or by one of its custodial units. It also oversees the smooth running of the state's internal systems of audit and oversight and the transparency of financial and administrative transactions; ensures that they are being conducted in full compliance with the law and its enactments and relevant regulations; ensures the absence of conflicts of interest or financial and administrative irregularities; evaluates the performance of entities subject to its supervision; verifies the economic, competent and effective use of resources; and identifies the reasons behind deficiencies in performance or production, specifying responsibility as appropriate.

The Institution's monitoring activities have extended to all governorates of the Sultanate after the opening of five new branches in addition to that in Salalah, ie in Sohar, Nizwa, Sur, Rustaq and Buraymi.

The Civil Service Council:

The Civil Service Council undertakes the responsibility of drawing up general policies related to the civil service and related plans of administrative development. It looks into decisions, laws and procedures aimed at increasing Omanisation and upgrading performance in the State's administrative apparatus.

The function of the Council is to undertake the task of developing civil



The Supreme Higher Committee for Five-Year Plans specifies the basic elements and guidelines for the five-year development plans. It conducts half-yearly assessments of these plans and follows up their implementation.



service systems, and increasing the efficiency of the methods, means and procedures routinely used in the work of the civil service; also to review policies, systems, harmonised pay tables, along with allowances, benefits and bonuses; and to propose amendments to same to the Council of Ministers; finally to adopt systems of administrative control designed to verify the integrity of the application of laws and regulations relating to the civil service.

The Sultan Qaboos University Council:

The Sultan Qaboos University Council works to maintain and advance the standard of university education and to achieve the maximum extent of conformity between the courses offered at Sultan Qaboos University and its graduate output and the requirements of the National Development Plan.

In 2015, the Council approved the introduction of the Diploma in Education as, and of the, 2015/2016 academic year. It also established the Academic Centre for Health Sciences at the University.

The Tender Board:

The Tender Board undertakes the responsibility of announcing tenders, opening bids, analysing and awarding government tenders whose cost exceeds RO3 million. Excepted from this process are contracts relating to security and defence projects and projects with specific connotations in law. The Council approaches its functions guided by measures designed to raise performance levels in government agencies, in order to ensure the proper and efficient use of public money.

During 2014, a total of 41 tenders issued by various government agencies and units sought bids that combined for a total cost to the state of 1,063,713,635 OR (one billion sixty three million seven hundred and thirteen thousand six hundred and thirty five Omani Rials).

The Education Council:

The Education Council (TEC) was established by Royal Decree No. 48/2012, the outcome of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos' commitment to the steady advancement of the Sultanate's education sector, of all of its stages and disciplines. The quality of education is vital to the needs of the labour market, as well as being a core value enshrined in the general policy of the state. The Education Council was founded to be an extension of the Higher Education Council, itself established in 1998 by virtue of Royal Decree No. 65/1998.

The Council was instrumental in the making of many decisions in 2014, including: the launch of the new educational qualification programme at Sultan Qaboos University; the increase in capacity for some educational disciplines at the same University; the creation, for students of the General Education Diploma, of opportunities in certain specialised scientific disciplines in the Ministry of Higher Education's foreign scholarship programme; and the



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adoption of a set of policies aimed at stimulating the foreign scholarship programmes, and mechanisms to deal with various related challenges.

Oman Medical Specialty Board:

Oman Medical Specialty Board (OMSB) oversees the training and qualification of doctors in the various medical specialties at postgraduate level. The goal is to equip them to meet the demands of health care at safe practice levels, and to reach the highest attainable standards of quality in their provision of superior patient care.

The Council has seen an increase in the number of doctors enrolled in its training programmes. From an initial 75 physicians, the number rose to more than a hundred in the academic year 2010/2011, and then continued to rise each year, to reach 147 in the academic year 2013/2014. The number of doctors trained by the Council in 2014/2015 then climbed steeply to 631. By the end of 2014, 414 Omani doctors had completed training in a total of eight batches, covering a range of disciplines.

The Research Council:

The Research Council regulates, encourages and provides material and moral support for scientific research and is the authority responsible for liaising between the different bodies and institutions involved in the field.

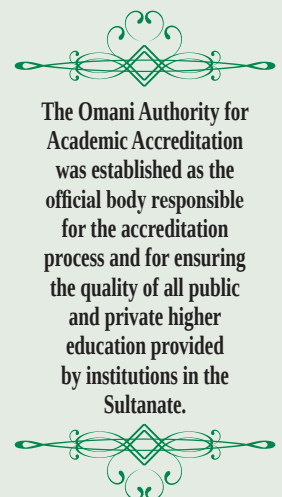
As part of a national strategy on innovation, TRC launched the Industrial Innovation Centre at Rusayl Industrial Estate in cooperation with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates. TRC has also launched the Educational Innovation Support Programmes in a number of schools in the governorate of Muscat, along with the Innovation Complex Muscat Project, which is expected to play an important role in promoting innovation.

Oman Academic Accreditation Authority:

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority was established as the official body responsible for the accreditation process and for ensuring the quality of all public and private higher education provided by institutions in the Sultanate; and for accrediting the academic programmes offered by these institutions. The Authority plays a key role in disseminating the culture of quality.

The beneficiaries of the services provided by the Authority include government and private institutions of higher education, along with the students who study therein, now and into the future, and their families, employers and various government agencies.

The Oman Academic Accreditation Authority has worked since its creation to develop a national system for the quality management of higher education based on international best practice, while taking into account the special requirements of the local Omani environment.



It has logged many achievements in this regard, including: development of a plan to manage the quality of higher education in the Sultanate. Known as the Quality Plan, this strategy was based on the results of a comprehensive analytical study of the quality requirements of higher education.

The Public Authority for Craft Industries:

The Public Authority for Craft Industries (PACI) is responsible for every aspect of the country's traditional crafts and seeks to nurture and develop them to continue to thrive as productive industries.

Figures released in mid-2015 revealed the number of craftworkers registered nationally as 12,986 males and females, with 1,930 receiving financial support at a total cost to the state of 514,300 OR.

The Sultan Qaboos Craft Excellence competition reflects His Majesty's recognition of the value and significance of the craft industries and demonstrates his high level of commitment to Oman's crafts people.

Attention to the Omani crafts sector culminated in the establishment of the Ajyal College for the Sciences of Craft Industries and Traditional Professions, as announced by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos in the *wilayat* of Bahla. The College will aim to provide the Omani labour market with qualified artisans who will be capable of keeping abreast of the sector's development needs while at the same time maintaining the authenticity of Oman's heritage.

The Capital Market Authority:

The Capital Market Authority (CMA) was established with an oversight role to ensure greater transparency in the activities of the stock market, and to take all such action as would improve the efficiency of the capital market, and the protection of investors.

The Authority has worked to develop the legislative and regulatory infrastructure of the capital market sector in the Sultanate, through the introduction and modification of regulations and controls and regulations governing the sector. These controls support the stability of the stock market and enhance its efficiency, factors essential to the current economic needs of the Sultanate and region and that march in step with developments in the global markets.

The Authority also plays a critical role in overseeing the Muscat Securities Market, and in promoting regulation and control of security offerings and transactions. This includes, as necessary, decisions and actions deemed of service to the interests of investors and the national economy.

The Oman Charitable Organisation:

The Oman Charitable Organisation (OCO) supports various social care and relief causes both inside and outside the Sultanate. The OCO has provided assistance to beneficiaries in many countries and situations, to Kosovan



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refugees, for example, and to Palestinians in need, as well as providing resources for the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip and the establishment of a number of educational facilities in the West Bank.

Over the years, the Organisation has responded with relief assistance in situations of personal or collective disaster resulting from accidents, earthquakes or famine in various parts of the world. It has special units devoted to the care of children and orphans, the disabled, the elderly and other disadvantaged social groups.

In response to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said's personal concern that the Sultanate maintain and extend its contribution to the charity sector, the Organisation has increased the volume of its activity and opened branches in Salalah, Sohar and Sur.

The Information Technology Authority (ITA):

Oman's digital strategy revolves around two crucial axes: community development, and the empowerment of individuals. The ITA has set out its interim objectives in the overall digitalisation strategy, principally: to train citizens and government employees in the basics of Information Technology to a point that could be assessed as digital literacy, and to provide specialised training courses for workers in the IT sector to acquaint them with licensing requirements.

As regards the development of e-government services and infrastructure, the Authority in 2014 issued 1.9 million electronic signature certifications, linked 914 websites to the unified government network, secured and managed security for 453 websites, and completed 731,461 transactions by way of the electronic payment gateway.

Among the most prominent national projects occupying the work of the ITA at present is the scheme to transition to e-government, with 84 government entities currently participating. This falls under the second crucial axis, as it relates to digital Oman, insofar as it serves to promote the use of e-government services by the public, while upgrading the quality of these services and encouraging their use in electronic form by citizens and residents and businesses.

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA):

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority received approval from ICANN (the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers), an internationally organized non-profit organization set up by the internet community to help coordinate IANA (Internet Assigned Numbers Authority)'s areas of responsibilities, including the adoption of the generic top-level domain name "oman" for websites in the Sultanate registered under Arabic names.

In February 2013, the Authority set about bringing coverage to villages that were still without telecommunications services, following the introduction of several initiatives, including re-planning the frequency domains on the



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principle of impartiality in providing coverage for network operators. This initiative has given rise to an agreement with the operators Omantel and Nawras on the establishment of more than 200 new stations, covering 250 villages distributed throughout the Sultanate.

Also launched on 4 July 2014 was the electronic system developed for management of the radio spectrum, which will cater to the needs of frequency users in the Sultanate by speeding up licensing, delivery and electronic completion. This will be of particular benefit insofar as concerns microwave transmissions by service operators and the issuance of aviation and shipping licences. It will enable a system to acquire a radio licence automatically within hours. This alone would be a regional-level first, one which would open new horizons for the highly efficient management of the spectrum in the Sultanate.

The Public Authority for Electricity and Water (PAEW):

The Public Authority for Electricity and Water (PAEW) was established under Royal Decree No. 92/2007, issued on 9th September 2007, following the privatization of the electricity sector in 2004. Headquartered in Muscat, the PAEW specialises in regulating the electricity and related water sector in the Sultanate in accordance with existing laws.

The PAEW - a legal entity that is financially and administratively independent - has the right to own the funds needed to enable it to achieve its objectives. It seeks to ensure the availability of electricity and water services throughout the country, protect consumer interests and enable the privatization of the Sultanate's electricity and water sectors to be implemented smoothly. It also aims to protect the interests of subscribers, particularly people with limited income, patients and the elderly.

The PAEW is tasked with implementing the general policy for this sector and preparing the plans and programmes necessary for developing that policy.

The National Records and Archives Authority:

The National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA), established under Royal Decree No 60/2007 issued on 2nd July 2007, as a national project to preserve Oman's history and establish a comprehensive system for managing public records related to government departments subject to the NRAA Law.

The NRAA has since its inception pursued its core aim of collecting documents and archives relating to the Sultanate from countries that contributed through their past relations with Oman to constituting the documentary archive. It also collects documents from citizens of the Sultanate. The NRAA has by these methods assembled a collection of more than a million documents, including 35,613 manuscripts, 104 stamp albums, and four currency collections. It also works with the oral tradition, documenting on audio or video platforms the recollections of citizens with an accurate memory of historical events. To date, the NRAA has recorded 143



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such Interviews.

The Authority has also worked to establish a modern management system for the Sultanate's collections of documents and archives that is compliant with International Standard ISO 15489, which tags a document from its creation through the three time-linked phases in its life: the active period, the semi-active period, and the historical period, as determined by its final destination. Since its relatively recent creation, the NRAA has managed to establish its working system within 26 government entities, and continues at an accelerated pace to complete this project with rest of the official establishment.

The Public Authority for Investment Promotion and Export Development:

The Public Authority for Investment Promotion and Export Development (PAIPED) was established by Royal Decree No. 52/2011 of 27th March 2011, drafted under the government strategy for the continuous development of the investment sector and promotion of Omani exports through attractive packages offered to local and foreign investors.

PAIPED is committed to encouraging greater participation by the private sector in support of Oman's drive for greater internal investment and export growth in sectors unrelated to fossil fuels. The overriding goal is to increase Oman's trade balance.

The Authority is also concerned with attracting foreign investments by facilitating all transactions and realising 'economic weight for the Sultanate' by following up economic developments in the world.

The Public Authority for Social Insurance:

The Public Authority for Social Insurance (PASI) provides social insurance cover for nationals employed in the private sector. It was set up for this purpose under Royal Decree No. 72/1992. Its role is vital in protecting this segment of the working community.

PASI aims to improve the quality of its services and promote mutual trust and satisfaction between employers and insured employees within the available resources and in line with laws and regulations in force.

The Public Authority for Stores and Food Reserve:

The Public Authority for Stores and Food Reserve was set up as an independent legal entity under Royal Decree No 62/1980, issued on 5th July 1980. It is responsible for storing and managing the State's basic foodstuffs as a food reserve on a permanent basis. It is responsible for maintaining this reserve in a fit state for domestic consumption and in a state of readiness for intervention in the event of economic crisis or climatic adversity. It also serves to stabilise the price of basic foodstuffs where local or overseas factors may cause sudden, sharp increases, keeping the price of these vital items at all times affordable to all.



The PAEW is tasked with implementing the general policy for the electricity and water sector and preparing the plans and programmes necessary for developing that policy.



The Authority maintains a routine interest in harvest statistics and the general impact of weather patterns on these and on market prices. It operates five departmental units distributed throughout in the Sultanate, tracking population density and the nature of the basic food commodities provided, dealing specifically with rice, sugar, lentils, powdered milk, cooking oil, tea and wheat.

The Public Authority for Stores and Food Reserve continues to grow, extending its network of warehouses, outlets and sites. Its target is an additional 52 stores. Meanwhile it continues to oversee the implementation of the grain silo project, which will see silos established in Sohar and Salalah.

The Public Authority for Consumer Protection (PACP):

The Public Authority for Consumer Protection (PACP) can claim many local and international achievements associated with consumer protection for the years 2014 and 2015. In the category of most rewarding of these was its selection to receive the Sultan Qaboos Award for Excellence in e-Government Services for its electronic inspection project “Field”. Meanwhile its “e-consumer guide” project won two awards, one for Best Government Service via Mobile Phone in the Arab world, and the international award for Best Government App for Mobile Phone.

These achievements confirm the authoritative position achieved by the PACP internationally, thanks in great part to its willingness to embrace innovation in the form of digital electronic projects that are in firm step with the accelerated pace of modern developments. In this way the PACP is connected to the world beyond the Sultanate digitally and to a standard consistent with the global ideal.

With Royal Decrees No. 66/2014 and No. 67/2014, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos amended the Consumer Protection Law and issued Oman’s Competition and Anti-Monopoly Law, in response to the rapid developments in market growth and the recovery of the domestic market in the Sultanate. These changing circumstances summoned the existence of laws governing the relationship between traders and consumers that would keep pace with consumer expectations as apply to current consumer transactions in the Sultanate and abroad. The Sultanate, as represented by the PACP, and in collaboration with various stakeholders, has been keen to introduce deterrent legislation that defends consumer and supplier rights from fraud. These laws also aim to regulate the relationship between the individual consumer and the business sector supplying goods and services.

The Special Economic Zone Authority at Duqm:

The Special Economic Zone Authority at Duqm (SEZAD), established under Royal Decree No 119/2011 on 26th October 2011, has been active in its role of managing the Special Economic Zone in Duqm, while overseeing business relations between companies and investors in the SEZAD Zone. It



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has concentrated on completing the drafting of legislation as necessary to the smooth running of the Economic Zone and to building its capacity in terms of technical, administrative and financial human resources to secure the maximum benefit for this enterprise.

On 26th December 2013, SEZAD Royal Decree No. 79/2013 delivered a major boost to domestic investment in the region and to the attraction of foreign investment through its incentive offerings in the form of facilities and guarantees for projects built specifically within the SEZAD zone. Heading up the incentive list was an exemption from taxes, 100% foreign ownership of projects and exemption from the minimum capital investment required under business and other legislation; along with exemption from all restrictions in regard to the introduction, handling and exchange of foreign currency and from application of the provisions of the Commercial Agencies Law.

The Public Authority for Radio and Television:

The Public Authority for Radio and Television (PART) aims to fulfil its media mission of raising the general level of public awareness, instilling noble values and embodying the citizens' sense of national identity. At the same time it seeks to enhance the Omani national's potential in all fields and expand his or her knowledge of the outside world and the events taking place in the international arena.

PART has extended the time slots allocated for live radio and TV transmissions, discussion programmes on general and specific development-related topics, and coverage of issues that are relevant to society as a whole.

On 1-5 February 2015, PART hosted the 11th World Conference for the Coordination of Short Radio Waves, a global conference on frequency formats. Short wave transmission is a focus of interest around the world, given its ability to deliver broadcasts to audiences many thousands of kilometres away.

The Public Authority for Manpower Register

On 19th May 2013, Royal Decree No 32/2013 was issued to amend some of the provisions of the regulations for the Public Authority for Manpower Register. This Decree specifies the powers and prerogatives of the Authority, which is entrusted with the establishment of a comprehensive database of manpower in various departments within the government sector (civil, military and security) and in private sector establishments. It defined the procedures necessary for the collection of storage of data on job-seekers and for furnishing data on the workforce employed in the job market. This involved the electronic linking of all units of the government sector (civil, military and security), private sector, and information detailing the migration of labour and employment in the Sultanate. This vital data assists departments responsible for planning effective employment policies in the state sector. It also helps private sector establishments, and guides educational and training policies by



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calibrating education, training and professional skills and experience on the one hand with the practical needs of the labour market on the other

The Public Authority for Civil Aviation:

The Public Authority for Civil Aviation, acting pursuant to Royal Decree No. 43/2013 of 16th September 2013, defined the Authority's objectives in promoting the civil aviation sector and all of its supporting facilities, and raising standards to the maximum achievable in terms of efficiency, quality, and safety and security of civil aviation and air transport.

In addition, the Authority provides meteorological and early warning services and management of the facilities it oversees. It puts in place regulations that ensure the quality of data and information and the speed with which they are transmitted to the relevant authorities. It reviews landing, transit and departure fees for aircraft, along with fees associated with meteorological services. It oversees air transport companies and airport operators in Oman, and strategies for the modernisation and development of national aviation policy.

On 2nd June 2015, the Authority unveiled its new logo, which reflects a sequence of achievements that have succeeded one another in the forward progression of the civil aviation sector. These achievements include the opening of the first phase of the Muscat International Airport expansion project, the opening of the new Salalah airport to air traffic, and early operational startup of Duqm and Sohar airports, in addition to the operation of the new air traffic management centre, which is the most modern in the Middle East and a world first in terms of the nature of the systems it employs.

The Public Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises:

The Public Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) was established under Royal Decree No 36/2013, issued on 30th May 2013 with a brief to strengthen the role of small and medium-sized companies capable of providing renewable employment opportunities for Oman's youth. The Authority helps and encourages them to establish and implement projects of their own, to take a hands on role in managing and developing these projects in fulfilment of the aspiration to self-employment and of the desire to contribute to economic diversification, innovation and expansion in the use of modern technologies.

On 3rd August 2015, the Authority announced the launch of the 2015 2nd Entrepreneurship Award.

The aim of the Entrepreneurship Award is to celebrate the entrepreneurial spirit and encourage small, medium and micro-enterprises to become active in creating jobs at home and contributing to a diversified economy based on knowledge and innovation. It promotes the culture of entrepreneurship in Omani society and raises the performance and competitiveness bar for



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SMEs, rewarding excellence, competitiveness and innovation. The dialogue surrounding the Award serves a platform for the exchange of experiences in entrepreneurship and in the development of SMEs.

The Public Authority for Civil Defence and Ambulance:

The Public Authority for Civil Defence and Ambulance was established under Royal Decree No. 3/2013, issued on 8th January 2013. It is a legal entity that is materially and administratively independent and it operates under the jurisdiction of the Royal Oman Police (ROP). On 30th November 2014, the organizational structure of the Authority was defined with the announcement of Royal Decree No. 68/2014.

The Authority has outlined a clear forward strategy to keep pace with development by providing the equipment and machinery needed to perform the work assigned to them in fire and rescue (land and water), and rescue of the injured, as well as search and rescue operations and dealing with hazardous materials.

The Authority has introduced several modern systems, including an incident management system, the first of its kind in the security services domain, and a system of visual protection and storage, and the medical care system, which aims to record information and details of injuries electronically before relaying the subjects to the relevant hospital via a terminal installed in all ambulances.

New 50-metre hoists and ladders were added to the service in 2015, and governorates experiencing demographic growth were allocated additional hoists to match the increased demand.

The Omani Authority for Partnership for Development (OAPD)

The Omani Authority for Partnership for Development (OAPD) was established by Royal Decree No. 9/2014 of 2nd March 2014. It is a legal entity affiliated to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, but which enjoys financial and administrative independence.

The OAPD's broad remit includes providing opportunities for the training and qualification of Omanis in specialised skills, supporting small and medium enterprises, and working to strengthen the private sector. It also promotes the use of technology in both the public and private sectors, and the integration of modern techniques into existing systems. It contributes to the strengthening of the military and security capabilities of the Sultanate at all levels; facilitates investment; introduces proposals to diversify sources of national income and move towards a sustainable and efficient economy, all in application of the partnership for development programme.

The Authority has begun to implement a series of projects aimed at creating economic diversity and expanding the range of revenue resources in the Sultanate through cooperation and partnerships with the private sector. The most important of these are the National Academy of Youth Projects, founded in collaboration with the Ministry of Manpower; and the Oman Centre for



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Marine Biotechnology, a partnership with Sultan Qaboos University; and the Aviation Academy project, run in consultation with Oman Air and the Oman Airports Management Company.

Public Authority for Mining

The Public Authority for Mining was established by Royal Decree No. 49/2014 issued 21st September 2014 with the founding strategy of conducting a comprehensive geological survey of the Sultanate and then developing the mining sector.

One of its early objectives will be to create a solid organisational infrastructure to support the expansion of mining, in coordination with other relevant authorities, proposing draft legislation and reviewing existing legislation and procedures of relevance to mining.

The Authority will prepare geological and mining studies for the purposes of disclosure and exploration of mineral resources and with a view to assessing projects of mineral use for economic value. It will publish data on geological and mineral resources by way of all media and in coordination with all relevant bodies and facilitate access to same. It will oversee all aspects of the the mining industry, from exploration to excavation, exploitation and development.

It will at all times protect Oman's geological heritage and develop the necessary controls to further this aim, while working with all concerned entities to exploit the Sultanate's mineral resources commercially. It will supervise and approve the design of mines and quarries, as well as the mining and quarrying processes in their entirety.

Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Sciences:

The Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Sciences (ONCECS) has as its main function the streamlining of the overlapping connections between Arab, Islamic and international organisations working in the areas of education, science and culture (UNESCO, ALECSO and ISESCO) on the one hand, and between the concerned authorities and educational and cultural institutions in the Sultanate on the other. It publicises Oman's heritage and the Sultanate's efforts in educational, cultural and scientific fields. It cooperates with the three above mentioned organisations in the interest of mutual understanding and interaction among people belonging to different cultures.

The Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation is awarded biennially through UNESCO's Man and Biosphere Programme. The prize is given in recognition of a distinguished contribution to environmental conservation made by individuals, groups, institutions or organizations in line with UNESCO policy and programmes.

The Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation is the first Arab award to be established internationally for environmental conservation. It was instituted on the initiative of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos in June 1989 with UNESCO's approval and blessing.



The National Human Rights Commission:

Reflecting His Majesty's continued commitment to the welfare of Oman's citizens and human rights in the Sultanate over the past 40 years , Sultan Qaboos issued Royal Decree No 124/2008 on 15th November 2008 setting up the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and defining its prerogatives. The Decree states that the Commission is a legal entity with operational independence. Based in Muscat, the Commission comes under the jurisdiction of the State Council (Majlis al Dawla).

On 20th February 2013, Royal Decree No 10/2013 was issued on the appointment of members of the National Human Rights Commission, which comprises 14 members (including 2 Omani women) representing different departments.

The National Youth Committee:

The National Youth Committee was established under Royal Decree No 117/2011, issued on 26th October 2011 and is an independent legal entity.

The Committee seeks to open up channels of constructive communication and productive dialogue with and between young people in the Sultanate, with the aim of promoting a sense of allegiance to the nation and its leader.

Its functions also include instilling religious values and the values of good citizenship, and promoting attachment to Oman's cultural heritage, the principles and practices of interaction and dialogue between different social groups, and the concepts and principles of social work and community service.

The Committee also seeks to raise awareness among young people about the legislative measures which define their obligations towards the State and society and guarantee their personal rights and freedoms in line with the provisions of the Basic Law of the State.

The National Crisis Management Committee:

The National Crisis Management Committee was set up at His Majesty's instruction in June 2010 to manage crises and establish protocols to ensure prompt response to exceptional circumstances requiring immediate services and/or subsistence and medical assistance.

Among the objectives of the Committee are the re-formulation of the national plan for crisis management and the creation of a central entity equipped to manage such crises. It is working to update information on all civilian facilities, roads, terrain and GIS databases; and to redistribute reserve stores food to all governorates of the Sultanate. It is currently engaged in establishing rapidly deployable hospital facilities, which can be airlifted and outfitting specialised operating units for use in crisis situations. It is also overseeing the supply of desalinated water to referral hospitals for use in the event that desalination plants are rendered out of commission.



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Sovereignty of The Law and Access to Legal Action



Sovereignty of The Law and Access to Legal Action

As a “state of institutions and law”, Oman’s justice system has benefited from the keen attention of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, who has never altered his commitment to supporting judicial oversight and the rule of law. This commitment has extended too to endeavours that narrow the gap between litigants and litigators in a manner such that justice and equality are fundamental values experienced by citizens and residents alike in this generous country. Justice is of such major civilising importance to a nation’s people, serving their progress and feeding the sense of security and stability that prevails within society.

The Omani judicial system has undergone remarkable advances, in its many aspects and offerings. It has become both a monument to the Renaissance and a protector of its gains. And so it may be said that the promulgation of Basic Law of the State by means of Royal Decree No. 101/96 and the dedication of its Chapter VI to the matter of the judiciary that sealed the progression of the judicial system to its present status along modern lines.

Royal Decrees 9/2012 and 10/2012, issued on 29th February 2012, which dealt with the Supreme Judicial Council and the regulation of judicial affairs, provide the basis for the “state of institutions and laws” which developed gradually in harmonious progression till the Sultanate reached a comprehensive stage of modernisation. This made it necessary to grant the judiciary complete independence and to separate authorities so that each authority could perform its role without intervention from others.

His Majesty the Sultan’s Royal patronage of the judicial system in his capacity as Chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council, has brought considerable esteem to the judicial system in Oman and has paved the way for attaining the overall goal that His Majesty the Sultan planned to achieve, which is developing the country’s judicial institutions and enhancing the ‘state of institutions and law’.

With the promulgation of the Civil Transactions Law under Royal Decree No 29/2013, issued on the 6th of May 2013, the schema of legislations was completed and new pillars were set up to support the “state of institutions and laws” whose foundations have been laid down His Majesty the Sultan in a manner that considers justice as the basis of rule—a reality, a target and a way of life.

The enormous gains seen in the legal and judicial sector are only some of the positive characteristics of the modern state. They are the outcome of the excellent planning that was undertaken in order to establish a justice system designed to maintain the country’s core values. This planning was open to



**His Majesty the Sultan’s
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considerable esteem to the
judicial system in Oman.**



modern developments, and made it a priority to raise a ‘judicial generation’ capable of responding to the changing needs of Oman, as it lives with the spirit of the age and interacts with its surroundings.

The judicial system has responded to the needs of modern Oman by keeping abreast of the country’s growth and development. The judicial system follows the highest international standards in terms of its infrastructure and the efficiency of the staff in this sector who have taken on this noble responsibility.

A proficient judicial inspection mechanism

The government of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said has worked to provide all of the instruments and tools necessary to help prepare the judicial system to achieve the required level of transparency in performance.

The Judicial Inspection Apparatus is a source of great pride for the Omani judicial system. This department is entrusted with monitoring the performance of judges and verifying litigation procedures. Its success comes complemented by the successful achievements made other institutions, and has enabled the Omani justice system to become a leading judicial system in the Arab world in terms of integrity and impartiality. The judicial authority in the country has selected the most competent and experienced judges, and entrusted them with the responsibility of upholding the integrity of the system by maintaining transparency and monitoring the courts and their rulings, dealing with problems if or when they occur.

An advanced justice system

The judicial system in the Sultanate enjoys full autonomy in taking decisions and issuing verdicts. This is explained by Article 60 of the Basic Law of the State, which states that the “Judicial Authority is independent and its functions are exercised by the different types and grades of courts which issue judgments in accordance with the law.”

The signature advances made by the Omani judicial system during the past few years have led to its being categorised internationally as one of the finest systems in the world. The Sultanate can today claim a solid legislative and legal system.

The Administrative Affairs Council

The Administrative Affairs Council was established under Royal Decree No 90/99, which promulgated the Judicial Authority Law. Article 16 states that “The Judiciary shall have an Administrative Affairs Council headed by the Chairman of the Supreme Court; its members shall comprise the three longest-serving deputy chairmen of the Supreme Court, as well as the Attorney General, the longest-serving Court of Appeal chairman and the longest-serving Primary Court chairman.” When the post of Chairman of the Council becomes vacant, or in his absence, or in the event of an obstacle precluding his attendance, he is replaced by the longest-serving member. In the absence of a Council member



The judicial system in the Sultanate enjoys full autonomy in taking decisions and issuing verdicts. This is explained by Article 60 of the Basic Law of the State.



or in the event of an obstacle precluding his attendance, he is replaced by the next member in line, from the area represented by the retiring member.

Royal Decree No 10/2012 on regularising the management of judiciary affairs states that “The Administrative Affairs Council, as stipulated in the aforesaid Judiciary Law, shall exercise the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice pertaining to the appointment, promotion, transfer, deputising and seconding of judges, all their occupational affairs and other matters defined by the law. The Council may propose laws related to the justice system, and its opinion must be solicited in this respect. The Council chairman shall exercise the jurisdictions and powers delegated to the Minister of Justice, as stipulated in the law, except for those stipulated in Articles 78 and 99 of the law.”

The Authority for Resolving Conflicts of Jurisdiction and Provisions

The Authority for Resolving Conflicts of Jurisdiction and Provision was established under Royal Decree No 88/2008. It is responsible for ruling on conflicts of jurisdiction between the different courts and decides the ruling to be followed in the event of a conflict between provisions and rulings.

The Judicial Authority Law provides for the structuring of this Authority within the framework of the Supreme Court. The Authority consists of the Chairman of the Supreme Court and five of his longest-serving deputies or the longest-serving among its judges, to whom is added the Chairman of the Administrative Court and the three longest-serving advisers of the court.

The Supreme Court

The Supreme Court, the highest court in the Sultanate, rules on the extent to which the laws and statutes comply with the Basic Law of the State and its provisions. In addition to overseeing the correct application of the Law by courts and monitoring judges’ rulings and the administration of justice, it also rules on the appeals filed before it.



The Chairman of the Supreme Court undertakes the chairmanship of the Administrative Affairs Council in all that pertains to the occupational affairs of judges.



The Chairman of the Supreme Court undertakes the chairmanship of the Administrative Affairs Council in all that pertains to the occupational affairs of judges. There is also a Directorate-General of Judicial Inspection comprising judges of the Supreme Court and courts of appeal.

The Courts Complex building in Ibra.

The Courts of Appeal

The courts of appeal hear appeals against rulings by primary courts. Each appeal court consists of three judges. There are courts of appeal in all governorates of the Sultanate.

The Primary Courts

The primary courts or courts of first instance are the courts of first recourse in matters of litigation. They consist of a single judge or of three judges (third circuit), and specialize in hearing civil or commercial cases,

requests for arbitration, personal status cases and general, labour, tax, leasing and other cases filed before them in accordance with the Law.

The Sultanate's 44 primary courts are to be found throughout the country. In 2013, the Sultanate's primary courts heard 56,356 summary cases, and ruled on 46,275, representing a completion rate in the delivery of summary justice of 82%.

The Administrative Court

The Administrative Court has progressed in a relatively short time since its creation to a far broader sphere of reference. Its initial lists had been limited by a fairly restricted working brief, until Royal Decree No. 3/2009 gave it the powers to examine a near-full range of administrative cases, with just minor exemptions under special provisions.

The Administrative Court has been a powerful influence on the conduct of administrative affairs. One of the effects of its impact on the areas covered by its jurisdiction has been an adjustment in the principles guiding certain management practices in government agencies which were ripe for correction. Its existence served as a form of monitor over the actions and decisions of administrative bodies subject to its supervision, and consequently the conduct of government agencies and the level of services provided by these entities was greatly enhanced. Management was more acutely aware of the principle of legality in guiding their decisions and actions, and the role of the administrative authorities in maintaining public rights and freedoms gained important legal support.

The processes of the Administrative Court have been achieving new levels of competency and efficiency in line with the steady increase in the volume of work it is handling under Royal Decree 3/2009.

Arising from its expanding responsibilities and the greater complexity of its caseload, the Court has now been afforded an appellate branch to deal with appeals with suitable dispatch. In addition a court unification department was instituted to address the matter of coordinating the principles governing the two authorities in appeal referrals. The Court has also been working to extend its presence to all governorates of the Sultanate, acting under the principle of bringing justice in the form of the court system closer to the affairs and claims of litigants.

The Notary Public Departments

The Notary Public Departments, covered by their own law promulgated under Royal Decree No 40/2004, play a vital role in safeguarding rights and the stability of transactions and working practices. These Departments produce documents, powers of attorney and marriage and divorce certificates and attest signatures. The Sultanate's 60 Notary Public Departments are independent units located in all governorates.



The Reconciliation Committees embody the inspirational vision of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, founder of the Renaissance and leader of modern Oman. They spring from the understanding that to build an effective modern society, the instruments of modernity must be introduced without neglecting the distinctive ingredients of traditional and national culture.





The Reconciliation Committees

The idea of mediation and reconciliation committees was not born today or yesterday in Oman, but rather is of ancient provenance. Society was well acquainted with the concept in a society inclined towards resolution by natural means, in which from early times the path chosen was the path of peace and conciliation. The Reconciliation Committees stand alongside the modern court system which has attained such respected status in the era of the modern Renaissance.

The Reconciliation Committees were set up under the Reconciliation Law promulgated by Royal Decree No 98/2005 and embody the inspirational vision of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, founder of the Renaissance and leader of modern Oman. They spring from the understanding that to build an effective modern society, the instruments of modernity must be introduced without neglecting the distinctive ingredients of traditional and national culture.

Statistics for 2014 show that Reconciliation Committee magistrates settled 18,642 out of 19,408 cases brought before them during the year. By 'settled' it is meant that the committee concerned issued either a ruling of conciliation or the absence of same. The number of requests not resolved by mutual agreement stood at 910, representing a ratio of 0.5% of the total. Where the disputing parties attended, the reconciliation rate was 89%, and this must be seen as a seal approving the success of this system.

**Office of the Higher
Judiciary Institute ..
fostering a culture of
court justice in Oman.**

The Higher Institute of Justice

The setting up of the Higher Institute of Justice was a noble initiative of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, Chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council, in fulfilment of an announcement His Majesty the Sultan made in Nizwa. The Institute was established pursuant to Royal Decree No. 35/2010 and Nizwa was chosen as its home in recognition of the outstanding historical role played by that ancient city in nourishing Oman's legal culture and enriching its judiciary, in every era past and present and every province of the country.

The Institute has been assigned the considerable and lofty task of bringing support to the authority of the Omani judiciary, and to feeding the court system and government departments with jurists and legal personnel of the highest training and calibre. The Institute has endeavoured to translate His Majesty's vision in its commitment to turn out cadres of graduates educated to the most rigorous and internationally accepted academic standards, and in this it has availed of such modern technology and teaching equipment as will ensure they are fully equipped for their future careers in law.

Given that the human resource constitutes the crucial link in this academic institution, great emphasis was focused on acquiring an able academic team who could provide the level of practical competence to its administrative functions.

Since the Institute admitted its first batch of students for the 2010/2011 academic year, it has processed a total of 159 students in five batches drawn from several of the country's judicial bodies (Administration Affairs Council, Public Prosecution, Administrative Court etc)

The Public Prosecution Department

The Public Prosecution Department continues to pursue its judicial mission in society by way of a rapid, yet well studied, sequence of steps towards optimum development, exercising meanwhile the functions with which it is entrusted. Its development proceeds apace alongside the steady advance of the Sultanate as it adopts the tools and technology of a contemporary state. The role of the Public Prosecution Department in the community continues to strengthen and conform to the realities of modern life.

The independence of the Public Prosecution Department was confirmed by Royal Decree No 25/2011, issued on 28th February 2011, and stating that the department shall be administratively and financially independent and that the Attorney General shall exercise the powers originally entrusted to the Inspector General of Police and Customs under the Public Prosecution Law.

In this way, an independent Public Prosecution has been fully established, enabling the Department to perform its duties as an independent department focused on protecting the rights of individuals and the public.

The legal personnel serving with the Public Prosecution Department are critical to the exercise of its practical functions, in carrying out the task of investigating and discharging legal issues. As such it was imperative that



The Public Prosecution Department continues to pursue its judicial mission in society by way of a rapid yet well studied sequence steps towards optimum development.



their qualification, selection and appointment should be conducted with this in mind. Since the work of the Public Prosecution Department began, it has recruited the very best graduates of the Faculty of Sharia and Law. Over time the Department has managed to accumulate a vast body of legal experience, and in the process confirmed its authoritative status. As such, and with a substantial body of complex case files to its credit, it now plays a pivotal role in all aspects of the investigation and discharge processes.

The Department has 144 members, distributed throughout the Sultanate, of whom 22 are female heads of public prosecution, along with a further 36 auxiliaries.

The Public Prosecution Department received 45,306 cases during 2014, an increase of 4,767 cases over the previous year.

Legal Affairs

The Ministry of Legal Affairs plays a vital role in establishing and updating the schema of Omani laws, on the peak of which lies the Basic Law of the State promulgated by Royal Decree No 101/96, which is the source of reference for all Royal decrees and laws that are issued from time to time.

It drafts royal decrees and bills and takes measures for their promulgation. It also reviews draft Royal decrees, laws, statutes and decisions produced by ministries and government departments before they are promulgated and published in the Official Gazette.

The Ministry studies and reviews draft international treaties, conventions and agreements to which the Sultanate becomes a party, offers opinions on applications to join existing agreements, conventions and treaties, and reviews contracts before they are signed if they entail financial commitments on the part of the state in excess of half a million Omani Rials. It also protects the government's interest in disputes arising out of the implementation of contracts to which the latter is a party.

The Ministry of Legal Affairs also provides legal opinions and issues official approved interpretations of Royal decrees, laws and statutes when circumstances so require. These are binding on all government departments with the exception of the judiciary.

The Ministry of Legal Affairs publishes the Official Gazette, which contains the official versions of decrees, laws, statutes and ministerial decisions, along with announcements and other materials which the law requires to be published in the Official Gazette.

To provide easy access for those with an interest in the law, a bound volume is issued yearly, containing the Royal decrees, Royal commands, laws and statutes of a legislative nature issued during the course of the year. To date, 41 such volumes have been published.

Other publications of the Ministry include books explaining the legal principles underlying opinions on legal issues. These appear annually and contain the texts of legal opinion issued by the Ministry that year, together with the statutes from which they are derived. To date 16 volumes have been published.



The Ministry of Legal Affairs plays a vital role in establishing and updating the schema of Omani laws, on the peak of which lies the Basic Law of the State.





The Sultan Qaboos Mosque in Nizwa .. celebrating creativity, art and beauty in Islamic architecture.

RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

Tolerance has long been a hallmark character trait of the Omani people. Omani society's respect for diversity of belief and tradition is key to the Sultanate's positive interaction with other countries and nations. Understanding, peaceful coexistence and acceptance of others, and influence gained through persuasion and wisdom, through generosity, kindness and hospitality, are indelible features of the Omani way of being, expressions of the unchanging identity of Omani society and Omani values.

Dialogue, friendship and respect for religious beliefs figure high among the principles espoused by the citizens of the Sultanate. Much has been done to deepen the concepts of coexistence and acceptance, and to consolidate the principles of respect for religious freedom. This ongoing state-supported endeavour, which fosters uninterrupted communication with others has been given practical expression in the establishment of centres for dialogue with

other religions and sects and of professorial chairs at many international academic institutions, through which to communicate a true picture of Islam as a religion that values space and peaceful coexistence.

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said has called for a spirit of compassion and renewal to guide minds and hearts, for the renunciation of violence and extremism, for moderation in belief, endurance and revival at all times. His Majesty is aware that the roots of violence and extremism lie primarily in the exaggeration of religious meaning, in militancy and intolerance. All of these things are negated in the true meaning of Islam, which urges the faithful to favour instead gentle persuasion and positive coexistence.

His Majesty uses many occasions to reaffirm Oman's moderate stance on freedom of belief, occasions such as the Royal address to the opening of the Council of Oman's 31 October 2011 session. In his address, His Majesty said: *"Where minds are open and accepting of many viewpoints, they will not be tainted by intolerance. It is better that they be sound and proper grounds for the building of generations and the furtherance of nations and the progress of societies."*

This approach to religious tolerance constitutes one of the basic principles that has guided the modern Omani Renaissance from its inception. The Sultanate guarantees personal liberties and secures their exercise under the law. Article 28 of this law stipulates that "freedom of worship should be exercised in accordance with established rites, provided that this does not infringe on public order or decency." The Personal Statute guarantees for non-Muslims residing in the Sultanate the right to establish strictures of their own, provided that this action does not contravene Omani traditions as in accordance with Article 282 of Oman's Personal Status and Family Law. Non-Muslims in Oman have their own places of worship, where they perform their religious rites in full freedom and under the protection of the law.

In positive consideration of this Royal vision and of its own efforts to assimilate the Sultanate's long history of inclusion, the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs has worked hard to spread awareness of Islam's enlightened approach. The Ministry has embraced the institutions of Islam and developed religious workers who are capable of understanding the spirit of the modern age without prejudice to the rich heritage of the nation. One of the prime responsibilities of the Ministry is to disseminate spiritual values and draw from religious tenets based on the Sharia of Islam in orienting citizens towards faith in the Allah and sound belief. The Ministry is also responsible for overseeing religious affairs in the country.

In this context, the Ministry has participated in a Symposium held annually over 14 consecutive years on the development of *fiqh*, a commitment which reflects the Sultanate's intrinsic culture and ideology, but equally one which has given birth to remarkable achievements in Islamic Jurisprudence. This event is held in high esteem among scholars and institutions in the field. The 14th session of the symposium was convened on 5-8 April 2015 under the



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title “Jurisprudence in our Time: Methodologies of Renewal in Religion and Doctrine”. Scholars, intellectuals and research specialists from within the Sultanate and from Arab and Islamic countries abroad attended.

Participants emerged from the four-day event with new insights and future visions, represented in 14 recommendations, all of which confirmed a commitment to networking with a view to preserving Islamic unity and brotherhood in faith. Similar focus was applied by scholars to addressing in an innovative and diligent manner issues of contemporary concern to law. In their statement the *ulama* present highlighted the critical nature of unity and brotherhood, of growth and integrity and reform, of optimizing benefit from the structured endeavour pursued by the Symposium on the development of *fiqh*. The recommendations, moreover, urged revival of teaching and guidance in the modern context and a promotion of the spiritual, educational, scientific and religious message to be directed at institutions of the media.

Under the directives of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos and, in implementation of UN Resolution 65/5/2010 which has designated the first week of February every year a week devoted to human harmony, the Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Sciences organised the 4th round of the “Human Harmony and Rapprochement Week” from 15-19 February 2015.

The event was built around the theme of religious and cultural understanding and the need for intercultural communication and promoted the role of dialogue in enhancing peace and stability in the world — notably by raising public awareness about key issues and reiterating the most basic values of tolerance and cooperation preached by all religions for the good of mankind. The week is also in full alignment with the core ethics of the Islamic religion and Islamic and Arab culture. Equity and justice, and constructive communication with all cultures and civilisations, are values espoused by these social communities. Dialogue is the intelligent option, the choice of the wise, and the means best suited to the resolution of problems and of the crises facing contemporary societies; for these challenges undermine the stability and harmony of human coexistence.

As part of its policy of highlighting the value of Oman’s intellectual contribution and cultural influence generally on Islamic thought, and as an expression of its profound interest in system values that enrich the human experience in an integrated manner, the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs publishes a periodical entitled “*Tafahum*” (Understanding), which seeks to narrow differences among people of different beliefs and to foster the Islamic call for tolerance. *Tafahum* works to establish the principle of people’s right to espouse individual religious views. It strives to review Islamic thought through research on the flexibility of the Sharia.

As it observes in the region, and the larger world beyond, so many examples and manifestations of conflict and collision and extremist expression, between nations and populations, and between communities within individual states; conflicts that cause pain and loss and that sabotage relations and destroy



The exhibition “A Message of Islam from Oman”, carries with it its call for tolerance, rapprochement, understanding and dialogue among all peoples of the world.





potential; that contribute to the escalation of hostilities between conflicting groups; the Sultanate believes in the crucial need for peace and stability to prevail. Stability needs be based on cordial relations between nations and peoples. Understanding, harmony and fruitful cooperation can only serve to fulfil common interests. Dialogue will accomplish deeper understanding between competing parties, will resolve issues peacefully and will enhance relations between them. Oman has been keen to lead by example in exercising these values, to demonstrate successful models of their application in implementing its own policies and practices at every level. This vision of harmony has been a personal mission of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, who has let no opportunity go by to promote its success.

A powerful expression of this vision is the exhibition “A Message of Islam from Oman”, which carries with it its call for tolerance, rapprochement, understanding and dialogue among all peoples of the world, while endeavouring to present a true image of the essence of Islam, with its values and principles rooted in acceptance. These values are based on a belief in human equality, in the value for human life and concern for the earth, and a desire to see greater goodwill and peace among the peoples of the world.

Since its launch in April 2011 and up to July 2015, the mobile exhibition has travelled to more than sixty six destinations in over twenty countries around the world. Under its full title, “Tolerance, Understanding and Coexistence: The Message of Islam in the Sultanate of Oman”, it has helped to spread an awareness

A symposium on the evolution of jurisprudence was a highlight in the calendar of cultural and academic events.



The Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs in 2014 released three documentaries highlighting the unique experiences of the Sultanate in the areas of tolerance and coexistence, Islamic art, and religious discourse.



of these values to the peoples of these nations and won growing respect from the international community. Among the international organisations that have played a part in its coordination is UNESCO, while it has the full endorsement of centres of religion anxious to promote moderate values and to foster peace and coexistence among peoples, religions and cultures.

The Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs has meanwhile launched a website (www.islam-in-oman.com), available in eight international languages, and in 2014 released three documentaries highlighting the unique experiences of the Sultanate in the areas of tolerance and coexistence, Islamic art, and religious discourse, all of which were very well received by local and overseas audiences.

The Sultanate sponsors events that bring together academics and scholars in Islamic studies, always in the context of promoting dialogue and understanding. Such events add to the body of information and knowledge available and enrich cultural reality with intellectual contributions that emanate from eclectic experience.

In a collaboration with the Latin Academy, the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs organised the 28th Session of the Conference on Shared Human Values under the title, “Shared Values in a Multi-Cultural World”. The conference ran from 23 to 25 November 2014.

The Conference, which is the first of its kind in the Gulf region, debated identity and global awareness, citizenship and shared values, global dialogue and coexistence with others in an era of pluralism, globalisation and social integration.

In addition to the Sultan Qaboos academic chairs established at some of the most prestigious American, European, Asian and Australian universities, and which play a vital and useful role in the study of Arab and Islamic civilisation, and in deepening the foundations and reach of dialogue between religions, the Sultanate has either established or supported the setting up of cultural centres and foundations around the world that share the goal of achieving more understanding between nations.

Motivated by the wishes of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, and in exercise of instructions delivered by him, numerous new mosques have been built throughout the Sultanate, helping to alleviate the pressure on existing mosques as the population grows. Other mosques have been restored or rebuilt, and ancillary services added to facilitate the needs of worshippers.

The many mosques that bear the name of Sultan Qaboos bin Said and which were built at his personal expense, tell another chapter of the story of the modern Renaissance he pioneered and of its deep concern for people. The Renaissance believes in providing the faithful with the means to perform their rites of worship in surroundings of peace, tranquility and safety. It tells a story of Oman’s role in and contribution to Islamic civilisation from its earliest days, as evidenced in architectural masterpieces that exude the spirit of Islam. Wonderful mosques, marked by creativity and harmony in their engineering



The many mosques that bear the name of Sultan Qaboos bin Said and which were built at his personal expense, tell another chapter of the story of the modern Renaissance he pioneered and of its deep concern for people.





and design, express the deeply felt impact of Islamic culture in the hearts of Muslims, manifested in these religious buildings of surpassing beauty.

The Office of His Eminence the Grand Mufti of the Sultanate, plays a leading role in spreading religious awareness based on proper knowledge of the Holy Qur'an and the guiding teachings of the Prophet's Sunnah. The office is the recipient every year of more than one hundred and fifty thousand religious *fatwas* in all areas of human activity. Its work derives from the programmes of the Institute of Sharia Sciences, an institution that aims to consolidate the tenets of Islam and its noble principles. The institute focuses on disseminating the values of tolerance and human love, which involves extending a friendly hand to the 'other' with a view to achieving positive cultural communication among peoples of different cultures and belief systems, while at the same respecting their identities.

Royal Decree no. 35/2014 signalled a material shift in the teaching of the Sharia, with the conversion of the Institute of Sharia Sciences to a College of Sharia Sciences. Moreover it founded, for a forthcoming phase in the development of the sharia sciences, a sound academic structure, one which will be independent administratively and financially and in harmony with international educational standards.

As many as a thousand students from more than 20 countries were studying at the College in the academic year 2014/2015.

The exhibition "Oman's Message of Islam" communicated the concepts of tolerance, understanding and coexistence that Islam espouses and that the Sultanate of Oman promotes.

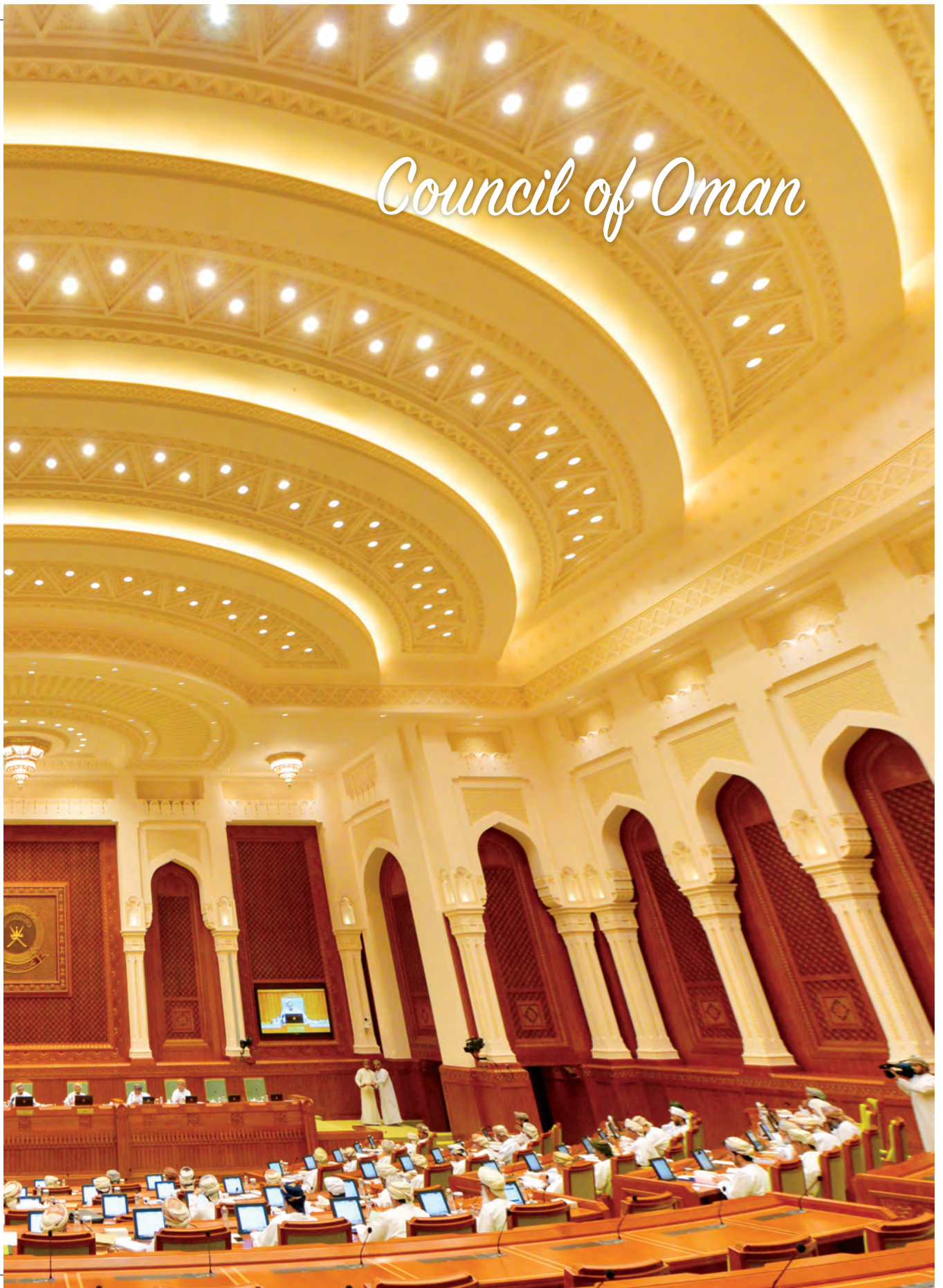


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Council of Oman



Council of Oman

Partnership in Nation building

The Sultanate of Oman, currently celebrating the forty-fifth year of its Renaissance, has evolved a distinctive form of democracy, as evidenced in the achievements of the 8th term of the Consultation Council which has embodied a pure form of Shura not only at the organisational level but also through the way its institutions have enabled Omani citizens to have an ever greater say in shaping and guiding the affairs of their nation.

The origin of Oman's democracy lies not only in her deep-rooted and fertile culture but also in the founding principles of statecraft which have governed His Majesty the Sultan's enlightened rule since he came to power 45 years ago.

It is undeniable that the initial impetus for enabling Omanis to realise their aspirations by participating ever more fully in decision-making in the development of their country was provided by the legal and regulatory powers granted to the Consultation Council in accordance with Royal Decree 39/2011 promulgated on 12th March 2011. However, the Municipal Councils also constitute an important milestone in the development of Oman's democratic *shura* by offering citizens a greater chance to serve their local communities – a development which took place hand in hand with other steps to consolidate the independence of the Public Prosecution and the judiciary.

Majlis Oman (Council of Oman)

The Council of Oman (Majlis Oman) consists of the State Council (Majlis al Dawla) – whose members are appointed by His Majesty from among distinguished Omanis with high levels of expertise –and the Consultation Council (Majlis al Shura), whose members are elected by citizens as representatives of their *wilayats*. The Oman Council enjoys a set of legislative and regulatory powers which constitute a significant advance in Oman's *shura* process.

Royal Decree No 99/2011, promulgated on 19th October 2011, altered some provisions of the Basic Law of the State in line with His Majesty's wish to expand the powers of the Council of Oman in accordance with Royal



The origin of Oman's democracy lies not only in her deep-rooted and fertile culture but also in the founding principles of statecraft.



Decree No 39/2011 promulgated on 12th March 2011. Its first article grants the Council of Oman legislative and regulatory powers in accordance with the provisions of the Basic Law of the State and existing laws, while its second article stipulates the formation of a technical committee of experts by Royal Order to draft amendments to the Basic Law of the State in accordance with the provisions of Article 1 of the decree.

Under these legislative and regulatory powers granted to the Council of Oman, the Chairmen of the State Council, Consultation Council (Majlis al Shura) and the Supreme Court and its two longest serving deputies shall be co-opted into the Defence Council when it meets to confirm the name of the individual who will accede to the throne. The Consultation Council chairman shall be chosen by election and the Consultation Council will have the power to cross-examine any service minister on matters relating to abuse of their powers in contravention of the law. The Council of Oman meets at the request of His Majesty the Sultan to study items submitted by His Majesty and takes its decisions by a simple majority.

Majlis al Dawla (State Council)

As affirmed by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, the State Council is an important component in the structure of Omani society. It provides a solid foundation for the exercise of *shura*, drawing on the values of Oman's heritage and history and Islamic law, while not neglecting modern technology.

In the framework of Omani *shura*, the State Council, by the nature of its composition and jurisdiction, plays a vital role in national development, as well as advancing Omani society towards the goals and objectives set forth by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos at the Council's inauguration.

Powers of the State Council

The State Council, in accordance with the enabling regulations of the State and Consultation Councils, is a financially and administratively independent legal entity with its premises in the Governorate of Muscat.

Article 58 of Royal Decree No 96/101 amended by Royal Decree No 99/2011 on the Council of Oman, specifies the powers enjoyed by the State Council in pursuit of its aims and goals. These include approving or amending draft laws forwarded to it by the Council of Ministers, proposing or approving drafts of new laws, revising or amending existing laws, discussing and issuing recommendations concerning draft development plans, the annual state budget forwarded by the Council of Ministers, and studying a copy of the annual report submitted by the State's Financial and Administrative Audit Office.



The State Council, in accordance with the enabling regulations of the State and Consultation Councils, is a financially and administratively independent legal entity with its premises in the Governorate of Muscat.



His Majesty the Sultan Opens the Council of Oman's Sixth Term 15th November 2015

In the name of God the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.
May Blessings and Peace be upon the Messenger of Mercy to
all mankind.

Honourable members of the Council of Oman.

It gives us great pleasure to meet you on this blessed day as we
open the *Majlis Oman* (Council of Oman)'s Sixth Term, and
we hope that its endeavours in serving this dear homeland will
be crowned with success.

Honourable members of the Council of Oman.

While we can feel justly proud of what Oman has already
achieved in various fields, we also aim to continue along the
blessed path of the Renaissance with ever greater will and
determination. This will only be possible if we all combine our
efforts and work together for the benefit of all.

We have been closely following the work of the Council
of Oman through its two component bodies – the *Majlis al
Shura* (Consultation Council) and the *Majlis al Dawla* (State
Council). We appreciate its efforts over this period, which
have had a tangible effect in helping to promote wide-ranging
progress towards further growth and development.

In asking God to grant success to us all in serving our homeland,
we pray that He will extend us His assistance. For He it is Who
hears and answers our prayers.

*Our Lord! In Thee do we trust, and to Thee do we turn in
repentance.*

May our dear homeland and its loyal people live every year in
prosperity and happiness.

And may peace be upon you and the Mercy of God and His
Blessings.









The State Council

Membership of the State Council

The State Council consists of a chairman and members (whose number does not exceed the number of Consultation Council members) who are appointed by Royal Decree. They are selected from among former ministers and under-secretaries and those of equivalent rank, as well as former ambassadors, retired senior judges and senior officers, acknowledged experts from the worlds of science, literature, culture, business and academia, in addition to eminent persons who have provided distinguished service to the nation and any others whom His Majesty the Sultan sees fit to appoint.

It is a condition that a member of the State Council be Omani, aged not less than 40 years on the date of appointment, not to have been a subject of a final verdict convicting him/her of a felony or crime or misdemeanour or dishonesty, even if reinstated, not to have been affiliated to a security or military department or legally restrained by a court decision or afflicted with a mental disorder.



Sessions and Bodies of the State Council

The State Council's term lasts for four years, the current fifth term running from 2012 to 2015. It has annual convening sessions, each of which lasts for at least eight months per year.

The State Council holds as many sittings as are determined by the Council Office, to discuss issues and draft laws presented to it, or proposed by the Standing Committees and approved by the Council Office. The Chairman of the State Council may call for extraordinary sessions as the need arises.

The State Council bodies consist of the Council Chairman, the Council Office, the Standing Committees and the Secretariat General.

The State Council Chairman oversees the smooth running of the work of the Council, ensuring that its actions are compatible with the law of the land and the Council's by-laws. He has two deputies elected in a secret ballot by an absolute majority of members of the Council at the beginning of the first convening session in every term.

The State Council Office sets the agendas for the Council and its committees so as to ensure their orderly operation. It oversees the activities of the Council and its committees and assists members of the Council to discharge their responsibilities. It also provides assistance to the Council's committees by drafting regulations governing their operation and coordinating their activities

in conformity with the Council's by-laws.

The Standing Committees: The State Council has six standing committees which are: the Legal Committee, the Economic Committee, the Social Committee, the Human Resources Development Committee, the Education Committee, and the Culture and Media Committee. Each committee consists of Council members specified by the Council Office at the beginning of each convening session. The Standing Committee's tasks are to review draft laws referred to them, in addition to other topics within their jurisdiction. At the beginning of each annual session, standing committees specify subjects within their jurisdiction which need to be studied during the session, in accordance with the Council's new legislative and regulatory powers.

The Secretariat-General: The State Council's Secretariat-General is headed by the Secretary-General, who is appointed by Royal Decree. The Secretary-General is assisted by a number of staff and employees from different departments and sections of the Council. The Secretariat-General



The State Council holds as many sittings as are determined by the Council Office, to discuss issues and draft laws presented to it, or proposed by the Standing Committees and approved by the Council Office.



assists the Council Chairman and other bodies in the performance of their duties and the fulfilment of their responsibilities, as defined by the Council Offices internal regulations, approved by the Council. The Secretariat-General consists of three assisting Secretariats: the Assistant Secretariat-General for Sessions and Committee Affairs; the Assistant Secretariat-General for Information and Research Affairs; and the Assistant Secretariat-General for Administrative and Financial Affairs.

Activities affecting the lives of Omani citizens

The fourth annual session of the Fifth Term (2014-2015) involved a large number of activities at home and abroad.

On the home front, the inauguration of the first sitting of the fourth annual session of the Fifth Term on 10/11/2014 coincided with the Royal Address given by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos to his loyal subjects on the occasion of Oman's 44th National Day, in confirmation of the State Council's ardent desire to give concrete expression to their allegiance to their Leader. The Council pledged its loyalty to Oman and the architect of the country's modern renaissance and its fervent wish for the nation's future prosperity and progress.

The State Council held general sittings, during which a number of topics were discussed and draft laws approved. Some of these topics, which were tabled on the agendas of each individual committee, were submitted to His Majesty while others were referred to the Council of Ministers.

Under the powers and prerogatives granted to it, the State Council debated the State Budget for 2015 and noted the points agreed. The Council also discussed draft laws forwarded by the Consultation Council (Majlis al Shura).

Furthermore, the State Council maintained open channels of communication with government agencies by hosting their Excellencies the Ministers who expatiated on the achievements of their particular Ministries. The Council was also visited by Under Secretaries and Directors General who gave full accounts of the work of their committees and the reports and studies prepared by their departments. Finally, the Council organized a number of activities at the national level such as 'The National Colloquium on Best Social Practices'.

On the foreign front, the State Council has sought to build bridges and enhance bilateral relations, regionally and internationally, through exchange visits and cooperation with foreign parliamentary institutions, particularly those operating the bicameral system (upper house, lower house). The aim was to project a positive image of the Sultanate's experience in the field of *shura* and balanced democratic development, based on the country's heritage, its values, its Islamic Sharia code and its history while utilizing the benefits of modern technology. This is the rationale for the exchange of visits with analogous regional and international councils and organizations.



At the commencement of the annual session of its Seventh Term, the Consultation Council entered a new era in its service to the nation. Substantial legislative powers were added to the existing responsibilities.



Majlis al Shura (Consultation Council)...

Participation in Decision-Making

As the fourth annual session of the Seventh Term on the Consultation Council draws to an end, the election of members for the Eighth Term falls due. Thus, the Council continues its distinctive experiment, entrusted to it by Royal Decree, of popular participation in national decision-making, which is the hallmark of Omani *shura*.

The elections to the Consultation Council's Eighth Term involves an abundance of candidates both male and female and increase in the membership by the addition of an additional candidate for the *wilayat* of Ja'alanBani Bu Hassan by Decision 61/2015 of the Ministry of the Interior regarding representation of the *wilayats* for the Council's Eighth Term.

The amendments to the Basic Law of the State promulgated by Royal Decree No 99/2011 and implicit in the Law on the Election of Members to the Consultation Council (Royal Decree 58/2013) have ushered in a new era of independence and impartiality in electoral supervision, inasmuch as the regulatory authority has been granted full legal powers to conduct proceedings in a transparent and equitable manner.

The Seventh Term of the Majlis al Shura represented a major turning point in Oman's *shura* (consultation) process. During its Seventh Term the Majlis moved radically towards the exercise of full parliamentary action. State governance was consolidated by an enhanced partnership between the government and the Council, with consequent benefit to the accomplishment of the nation's comprehensive development objectives. This new form of *shura* emerged as a result of the expanded legislative and regulatory powers granted to the Consultation Council in Royal Decree No 99/2011 which stipulated amendments to the fifth chapter of the Basic Law of the State, in the matter of the Oman Council in general and the Consultation Council in particular.

Election of the Majlis al Shura Chairman from among the Council membership represents tangible expression of these new powers and an unprecedented event in the nation's history. The Council is now authorized to scrutinize the draft State Budget, Five-Year Development Plans, and economic and social agreements ratified or intended to be ratified by the government. The Council also has the right to cross-examine service Ministers where they may have exceeded their prerogatives in breach of the law, as well as other regulatory instruments in its enhanced scope of action.

At the commencement of the annual session of its Seventh Term, the Consultation Council entered a new era in its service to the nation. Substantial legislative powers were added to the existing responsibilities and practices of the State Council and the Consultation Council in accordance with Royal Decree No 99/2011. These powers greatly enhanced the role of *shura* in democratic and transparent governance, enabling it to play a key role



The Seventh Term of the Majlis al Shura represented a major turning point in Oman's *shura* (consultation) process. During its Seventh Term the Majlis moved radically towards the exercise of full parliamentary action.



in comprehensive development through a wider participation in national decision making.

The Consultation Council now has the prerogative of questioning ministers on matters related to abuse of power in contravention of the law, to discuss these issues and submit its findings to His Majesty the Sultan. It may compel service Ministers to provide the Council with annual progress reports on the projects undertaken by their Ministries. The Council also has the right to summon any Minister to report on and discuss any matter within his/her jurisdiction. The State Financial and Administrative Audit Office must forward copies of its annual report to the Consultation Council and the State Council. The Consultation Council studies and comments on draft laws and development plans, as well as draft agreements on economic and social matters which the government intends to ratify. The Council's conclusions on these matters are then put before the Council of Ministers.

During its fourth annual session of its Seventh Term (2014/2015), the Consultation Council discharged a full and varied agenda. It held a series of seminars and discussions on the topic of the Omani community and its aspirations, during which it hosted a number of their Excellencies the Ministers. It also approved a body of recommendations and decisions proposed by the various Standing Committees after detailed study.

Close coordination

A feature of Omani *shura* is the close coordination between the legislative and executive branches of government, an approach which serves the national interest in the execution of development plans, enhanced levels of performance and greater participation of citizens in decision making in all its aspects.



A feature of Omani *shura* is the close coordination between the legislative and executive branches of government, an approach which serves the national interest.



Following the guidelines laid down by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, continuous communication is maintained between the Council of Ministers and the Council of Oman, as well as the uniting of efforts to respond to the current challenges in the field of national economic and social development. Such an approach is also calculated to enable Omani citizens to make a constructive contribution in the service of present and future generations. To this end, on 6th April 2015 a joint meeting was held between the Council of Ministers and the Consultation Council with the aim of realizing a practical perspective on efforts to implement development projects and programmes and effecting an exchange of views on a number of topics of concern to both Councils.

Prerogatives of the Consultation Council (Majlis al Shura)

The Consultation Council (Majlis al Shura) is a financially and

**The Shura Council ..
broad legislative and
supervisory powers.**



Omani women participated in the Shura Council elections, in both both voting and as candidates.

administratively independent legal entity with its premises in the Governorate of Muscat.

The Consultation Council discusses the Five Year Development Plan and the General State Budget in the presence of the concerned minister, who responds to any queries the Council members raise with him before the relevant Royal Decrees are issued and come into force. The Council also studies and comments on topics referred to it by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos or the Council of Ministers, on which the Council makes recommendations and suggestions to the appropriate quarter. The Chairman of the Council submits an annual report to His Majesty the Sultan on the results of its activities.

The Consultation Council has the right to propose draft laws to the government and participate in the preparation of Five Year Development Plans. The Council's Chairman is a member of the Supreme High Committee for Five Year Development Plans, which sets out the Plan's main features and monitors their implementation.

Sessions of the Consultation Council

The Consultation Council's term runs for four years, beginning from the date of the declaration of the official results of its elections. The term ends on the 30th September of the fourth year of its term. The Council's current seventh term will therefore end on 30th September 2015.

The Consultation Council has an annual session which runs for at least eight months each year. This enables the Council to hold sufficient sittings to study and debate the topics, draft laws and other matters on its agenda that are of concern to Omani society and its citizens. The Council may also hold extraordinary sittings.

Bodies of the Consultation Council

The Consultation Council exercises its powers and prerogatives through its four main bodies. These are the Chairman, the Council Office, the Standing Committees and the Secretariat-General.

The Chairman oversees the proceedings of the Council, manages its sittings, represents it in its dealings with other bodies and speaks on its behalf. He has the right to convene extraordinary sessions as necessary. He and his two deputies are elected at an extraordinary session summoned by His Majesty in accordance with Article 58 subsection 12 of the Basic Law of the State.

The Council Office sets the timetable and agenda for the Council's ordinary sittings in the light of the activities of its committees and the topics referred to them or laid before the Council. It also manages the Council's business between sessions.



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These are the Chairman, the Council Office, the Standing Committees and the Secretariat-General.



Standing Committees. In accordance with the Council's new by-laws, the number of Standing Committees has been raised to ten. These are : the Legal Committee, the Economic and Finance Committee, the Defence, Security and Foreign Relations Committee, the Health and Environment Committee, the Education and Research Committee, the Services and Social Development Committee, the Youth and Human Resources Committee, the Food and Water Security Committee, the Media and Culture Committee and the Budget and Closing Account Committee.

The Secretariat-General consists of the Secretary-General who is appointed by Royal Decree and a number of employees and specialists. The Secretariat-General assists the Consultation Council and its bodies in carrying out its tasks and facilitates its relevant organizational and administrative procedures. The Secretariat-General plays a key role in the smooth running of the Council's operations. It should be noted that the Council drafts its organizational structure and internal regulations with a view to enhancing its performance.

Legislative Instruments and Activities

The Consultation Council exercises its powers and prerogatives in accordance with accepted parliamentary procedure. Its legislative and regulatory powers have been expanded since the Basic Law of the State was amended, enabling it to play a greater role in the decision making process and in expressing the aspirations of the country's citizens. The Consultation Council monitors the performance of government departments and keeps abreast of the policies and programmes which the government implements relying on a number of accepted codes of practice such as: questioning, requiring information or discussion, and looking into proposals and requests of citizens regarding issues of public interest.

Members of the Majlis al Shura address questions in writing to ministers. Their replies are sent to the Secretariat-General of the Council and read out to members. Members express views on a wide variety of topics and make proposals about ways to improve public services and public amenities or raise concerns about obstacles and delays in the economic sector and means of resolving them. Some issues are forwarded to the Council's specialised committees for study or to solicit their opinion. Other issues are sent to the relevant government departments for clarification.

In addition to its role in the matter of national development and coordinating with the government in monitoring the Five Year Plan and the welfare of Omani citizens, the Consultation Council seeks to promote bilateral relations between the Sultanate and friendly countries. The Council has become a member of a number of parliamentary unions, and developed ties with the GCC, as well as Arab and international legislatures.



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A citizen votes in the Eighth Shura Council elections.

Municipal Councils... Effective Participation in Development Programmes

The creation of the Municipal Councils enacted by Royal Decree 116/2011 ushered in a new era of popular participation, integrating society and government in an even greater symbiosis. The Municipal Councils work with the Consultation Council in drawing up and tailoring development plans to the specific regional needs in accordance with individual aspirations within an overall national development strategy.

Since the commencement of their first term of office with the elections of 22 December 2012, the Municipal Councils have pursued their business according to a clear legal and procedural *modus operandi*. They hold regular sessions at which economic and social issues of concern to the local community are studied with a view to their particular developmental needs and aspirations.

A notable achievement of the Municipal Councils during their short period of existence has been the dedicated and responsible attitude which their members have displayed in dealing with the developmental needs and aspirations of the local community. They have scrupulously followed up matters within their remit which have been referred to particular government departments and have dealt with local community issues in a needs-based and consultative manner. In addition, during this preliminary period of their operation, the Municipal Councils have laid the foundations for ever closer cooperation and interaction



Since the commencement of their first term of office with the elections of 22 December 2012, the Municipal Councils have pursued their business according to a clear legal and procedural *modus operandi*.



with government departments in pursuit of the goal of comprehensive development.

According to the provisions of the Municipal Councils Law promulgated by Royal Decree No 116/2011, and its implementing regulations enacted by Diwan Decision No 15/2012, there are 192 Municipal Council members from the Sultanate's 11 governorates, distributed as follows: Muscat 26, Dhofar 24, Musandam 8, Al Buraymi 8, Al Dakhiliyah 26, Batinah North 28, Batinah South 22, Sharqiyah South 16, Sharqiyah North 16, Dhahirah 10 and Al Wusta 8.

In addition to the 192 members elected by citizens, Municipal Councils comprise representatives of government departments with a grade of Director General or Department Director in the case of Councils which do not have the establishment for Directors General.

Municipal councils helped manifest society's aspirations for development and progress.

The government departments concerned are as follows: Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources or Muscat or Dhofar Municipality, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Housing, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs, Ministry of Social Development, Royal Oman Police, and Sohar Municipality in the case of the North Batinah Governorate. In addition, each Council co-opts two citizens of sound judgement and reputation from within the governorate's population, selected by the Minister of the Interior or by the concerned Minister in the case of the governorates of Muscat and Dhofar.

The Muscat Municipal Council is presided over by the Chairman of Muscat Municipality, while the Dhofar Municipal Council is presided over by the Chairman of the Dhofar Municipality. As for the rest of the governorates, their Municipal Councils are headed by their respective governors.

The Municipal Councils Law specifies the powers of the Municipal Council within the framework of the general policy of the State and its development plans. These powers include the offering of opinions and recommendations on council systems and services in coordination with the respective departments in the following areas: construction, improvement and beautification of streets, public places and beaches; public health and anti-environmental pollution measures; water supply, waste water, public parks, and street lighting, schools, housing, places of worship, health and commercial centres, car parks. In addition, the Council should present proposals in coordination with the respective departments in the matter of : gardens public parks and recreation areas, protection of beaches from pollution and coastal erosion.

In collaboration with the concerned departments, the Council follows up implementation of ordinances relating to lighting, water supply, waste water and other public amenities. It also monitors advertisements and regulates public and private shop signs and the establishment of markets, abattoirs, and waste disposal and re-cycling according to the highest technical specifications. Finally, it makes by-laws regarding public places and their use by street vendors, restaurants, cafes, commercial establishments and industrial sites, areas containing hazardous materials or presenting a danger to public health.

The Municipal Council's powers also include participation with other concerned bodies in optimizing public benefit from development projects in accordance with the Law on Expropriation of Public Utilities;



The Municipal Councils Law specifies the powers of the Municipal Council within the framework of the general policy of the State and its development plans.



in making ordinances to control stray animals; in designating districts, public spaces and roads; and making urban planning recommendations concerning residential quarters and commercial, industrial and tourist areas.

Further, Municipal Councils study proposals presented to them and issue decisions and recommendations in this regard. They coordinate with other concerned bodies in defining and creating parking locations for vehicles and mooring areas for boats. They study complaints submitted to them by individuals and organizations regarding matters which fall within their jurisdiction and establish the necessary data to investigate such complaints.

In coordination with other concerned bodies, Municipal Councils impose, alter and cancel municipal fees and specify methods for their collection. They monitor service projects in the governorate and make comments to the concerned authorities regarding exploitation of public utilities within the governorate.

Municipal Councils deal with social issues, including negative or antisocial phenomena for which they propose solutions in coordination with the concerned departments. They also arrange cultural and recreational activities such as fairs and tourism events. They make proposals on the operation of taxis and means of public transport and, together with the concerned departments, they follow up implementation of contracts regarding the governorate's financial rights and obligations.

The Municipal Council also liaises with other neighbouring Councils in resolving issues regarding services to villages and population concentrations. They liaise with other departments in making recommendations and following up measures to control begging. They propose programmes to assist the needy and those on limited incomes, and provide care for orphans and those with special needs.

In coordination with concerned departments, Municipal Councils offer immediate relief to victims of disasters such as fires and adverse climatic events such as floods and storms, channelling financial compensation in such cases. They also communicate with the local community and private sector establishments and hold meetings to review development-related proposals for their respective governorates.

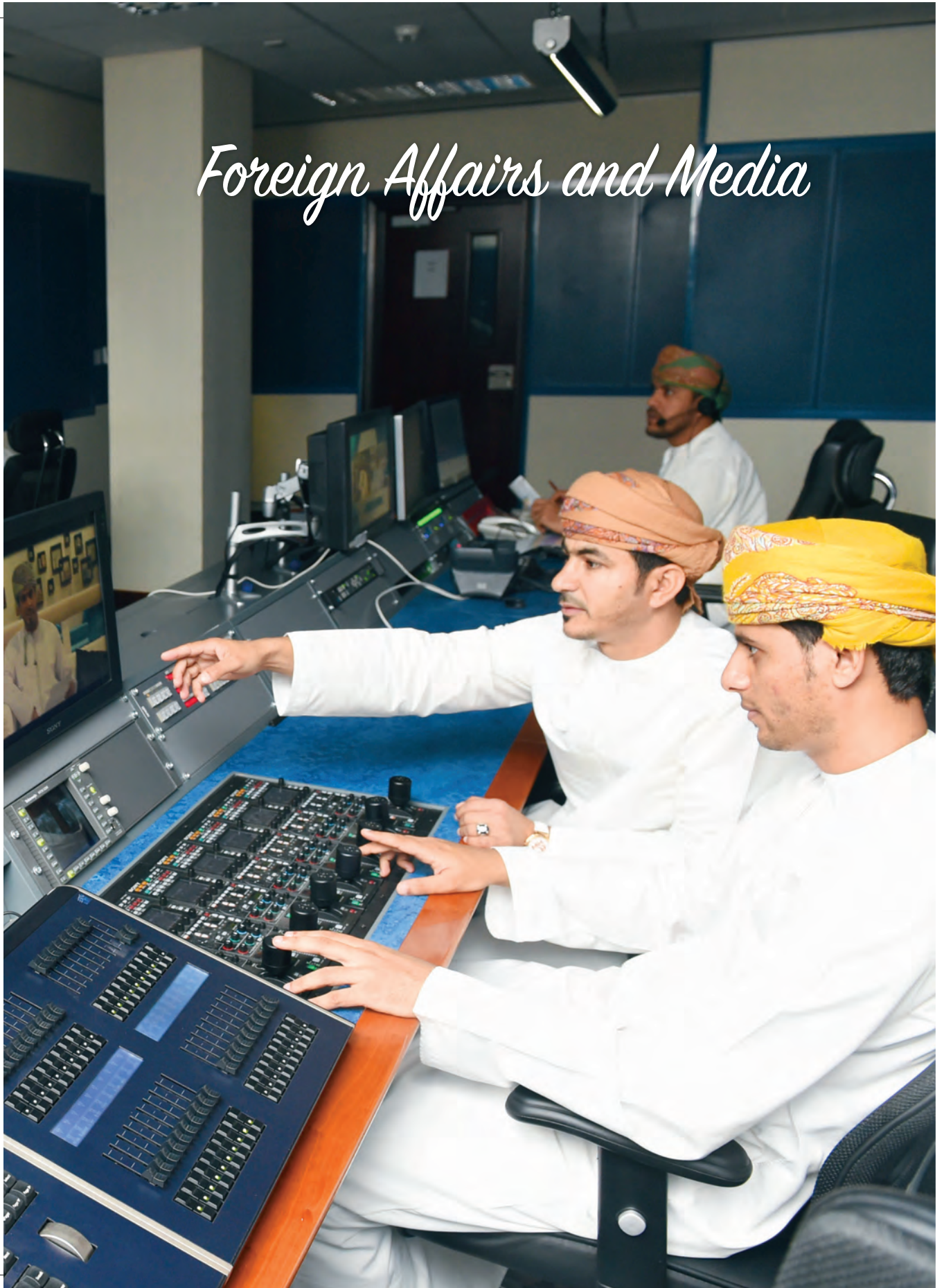


The Municipal Council also liaises with other neighbouring Councils in resolving issues regarding services to villages and population concentrations.





Foreign Affairs and Media



Foreign Affairs and Media

Friendship, Dialogue and Trustworthiness Foster Development and Peace

The core principles of the Sultanate's foreign policy stem from the strategic vision of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said. They are principles based on wisdom, prudence and poise, on the values of peaceful co-existence between all peoples, of good neighbourly relations, of non-interference in the internal affairs of others, and of mutual respect for sovereign national rights.

The Sultanate, meanwhile, has been much inspired in its approach to foreign policy by Oman's own historical narrative, a chronicle of tolerance, clear communication and respect for others. These values underlie the dynamic of its interactions with the outside world and have earned for Oman a credibility that is confirmed by its positive influence in the region and beyond.

From this combination of reliance on what has worked to Oman's advantage in the past, in terms of successes in conflict resolution, and, crucially, the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos in the service of local and international peace and stability, a firm and balanced approach to external affairs has sustained the Sultanate through sometimes turbulent times. Indeed the crucial factor of His Majesty's devotion to the priority of peaceful relations is itself derived from his country's history, in which clarity and parity guide its approach to all global issues of human and political concern.

His Majesty's enlightened, and consistent, approach to foreign policy has aspects that are virtually unique to Oman in today's terms, being free of antagonistic or expansionist ambitions. As conforms with Omani tradition, it takes into account geo-strategic realities rather than temporary ideological positions in its overall goal of consolidating the foundations of security and stability, through bilateral and multilateral cooperation based on common interests.

Oman has weathered regional and international storms, dealing with each as it arises confidently and effectively. It has seen economic and other interests as considerations increasingly important in the application of its policies, never ignoring the positive influence of common interests. It takes



The Sultanate has been much inspired in its approach to foreign policy by Oman's own historical narrative, a chronicle of tolerance, clear communication and respect for others.



the broader view, and is itself seen by many as a model of approach and conduct and practice.

The foresight and diplomacy which are the hallmarks of Oman's manner of dealing with neighbours and fellow states, from the Gulf to the broader Arab world and beyond, see international conventions and treaties as the reference points for the demarcation of its own national borders. It treats borders not as barriers, but as bridges to friendly neighbouring territories. Cooperation and amicable exchange are the fuels of its world view, and it uses these virtues as tools to achieve peaceful solutions to all border issues.

His Majesty acts from a true conviction in the need to find, and once found to deepen, understanding, trust and dialogue between peoples and in this way to create harmony, promote peace and support a climate favourable to comprehensive development in the world.

Foreign policy, in the view of His Majesty, is a platform for the exercise of "good neighbourliness and non-interference in the internal affairs of others, respect for international laws and norms, support for cooperation between countries and for opportunities for dialogue among them. In this way we express our conviction that the solution to difference is a spirit of reconciliation and understanding; it is civilised behaviour and it leads to better and more permanent results."

The Sultanate has in this spirit contributed in great measure to the service of peace in the region and internationally. Guided by His Majesty's unshakable conviction, it has brought clarity, transparency, objectivity and rationality to the thorniest issues of contention.

In his own words: "This policy has helped to establish positive relations with various countries and peoples of the world. These relationships support our efforts to stabilise our region, and to promote the spirit of brotherhood, friendship and constructive cooperation between peoples, to contain differences that could otherwise have adverse consequences, and in avoiding such adversities, free up resources that enable the countries of the region to devote themselves to progress and self-development."

It was in this spirit that the Sultanate, playing for high stakes, encouraged the attainment of the P5+1 agreement reached between six world powers and the Islamic Republic of Iran on the Iranian nuclear programme. This was a historic event in every sense of the word, one which sealed the efficacy and maturity of Oman's diplomatic skills on the world stage; for its success in guiding the two sides towards the middle ground which secured the necessary compromise.

The Sultanate has lived close to the Iranian nuclear issue in every sense. His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said has led a solid path through the process, engaging in its every step and turn, and been rewarded for his faith in its success with a result that promises a safer world for all. Frontline beneficiaries of this success are the countries of the Gulf and its surroundings,



The Sultanate, playing for high stakes, encouraged the attainment of the P5+1 agreement reached between six world powers and the Islamic Republic of Iran on the Iranian nuclear programme.



for the agreement offers generous protection to the interests of all parties and all peoples of the region.

The agreement acted as a powerful vote of confidence in the Sultanate's foreign policy, a policy rooted deep in the ideology of the modern renaissance pioneered by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos. The message of the renaissance, insofar as it concerns Oman's interactions with others, is an unambiguous one of tolerance and understanding, of peaceful dialogue as the sole means of reaching compromise and removing obstacles to humanitarian goals. All international institutions aspire to a world in which humanity may live in safety and understanding, supported by a common living system that respects the rights, needs and interests of all parties.



Within the GCC

Oman was an active participant in the establishment of the Gulf Cooperation Council and went on to fulfil a major role in supporting its goals of development, security and stability in the region. His Majesty Sultan Qaboos has made clear the determination of the Sultanate to preserve the gains achieved thus far and to pursue further programmes within the collective framework of the Council.

The strong ties that bind Oman and its fellow GCC states are cemented by shared history, by common political, economic and social goals. Together GCC members seek to achieve greater coherence, cooperation and integration in ways which will reflect positively on the lives of the peoples of these countries. The Sultanate believes in the significance of the role played by the GCC and has always encouraged greater endeavours by the Council towards integration and closer cooperation among member states.

Oman has been involved in all GCC summit meetings. It has consistently promoted more prominent joint action by GCC leaders, along with action

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that can achieve greater prosperity and better standards of living for the citizens of its constituent states. Underlying its philosophy of greater harmony among neighbours is a desire to see the region spared of the risks that threaten its security and stability and the achievements of development. As always, Oman has sponsored the language of dialogue and understanding and promoted peaceful solutions to problems and conflicts, addressing them individually without prejudice and with reason and wisdom.

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said keeps an open door to his neighbours, the leaders of the GCC countries, always maintaining a readiness to consult on any and all issues that might be of service to the peoples of the region.

He delegated His Highness Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmod Al Said to attend the 35th Summit of the Supreme Council of the GCC, held in the Qatari capital on 9 December 2014.

On behalf of His Majesty the Sultan .. HH Fahd bin Mahmoud led the Sultanate's delegation to the 35th GCC Summit in Doha.



Representing His Majesty the Sultan .. HH Sayyid Asad bin Tareq chairs the Sultanate's delegation to the 26th Arab summit in Sharm el-Sheikh.

Within the Arab region

The Sultanate closely guards its Arab affiliation, with its bonds of shared religion, history and common goals. It works to strengthen its relations with Arab countries across the board, in all matters that serve mutual interests and benefit their citizens. It emphasises the importance of building on joint Arab action, expanding the scope of cooperation between sister states and manifesting investment potential with a view to carrying greater prosperity and progress across the Arab world.

The Sultanate's even-handed approach is highly regarded and trusted by Arab leaders, who acknowledge its history of positive contributions to the settlement of many inter-Arab differences and issues, helping to reduce the causes of tension, and supporting all regional and international efforts to strengthen the foundations of peace and stability in the region. Oman is deeply aware of the strategic importance of this region and finely attuned to the challenges facing it, with all of their negative, and sometimes positive, impacts. As an active GCC member, the Sultanate collaborated with its fellow GCC states, along with the permanent members of the UN Security Council, in drafting the Gulf initiative to resolve the Yemeni crisis that erupted in 2011. The Yemeni crisis served as a harbinger of what came to be known as the Arab Spring. Once again, motivated by the imperative to

The Sultanate's even-handed approach is highly regarded and trusted by Arab leaders, who acknowledge its history of positive contributions to the settlement of many inter-Arab differences and issues.



preserve unity and stability in a neighbourly state and to spare the blood of our Yemeni brothers, Oman sought a resolution of differences between the Yemeni parties through dialogue and a renunciation of violence and arms in settling conflict after the situation became aggravated once again in the summer of 2014.

Oman actively promotes Arab and international efforts to reach a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict through the achievement of a just and comprehensive solution that would end Israel's occupation of Arab lands. This is the framework within which it has supported the peace process between the Arabs and Israel since it began in 1991. It backs all efforts to settle the conflict in accordance with legitimate international resolutions, as it did the Arab peace initiative in support of the Palestinian people's efforts to achieve their legitimate right to an independent state. This is fully in accordance with the principles of international law. It has condemned the arbitrary treatment of Palestinian citizens by Israel in the occupied territories, and the increased pace of settlement activity, along with the repeated attacks by Israeli settlers on the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and the siege imposed by Israel on the Palestinian people, especially in the Gaza Strip.

The Sultanate leaves no stone unturned in its efforts to strengthen and develop bilateral relations with the Arab countries in political, economic,

The Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs receives the UN's Envoy to Syria.

Oman actively promotes Arab and international efforts to reach a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict through the achievement of a just and comprehensive solution that would end Israel's occupation of Arab lands.

military, security, cultural and other matters. This it accomplishes through the regular exchange of visits by senior officials, through regular meetings of joint committees, and by formalising areas of cooperation through agreements and memoranda of understanding concluded with various Arab countries. All such exchanges benefit and strengthen Arab relations and serve common goals and common interests.

Towards the same ends, the Sultanate supports the Arab League's efforts, both to develop its own inner working mechanisms, as well as those geared towards achieving a lasting, comprehensive and just settlement of the Palestinian issue in line with legitimate international agreements.

Oman supports every effort designed to further the cause of peace, security and stability in the region and seeks out peaceful solutions to the crises faced which may be achieved through dialogue.

The Sultanate is always willing and ready to participate in Arab summit meetings, applies its diplomatic skills energetically to heal rifts in Arab relations, believes in the importance of this role, that is to say the role of bolstering and cementing Arab relations, of furthering common Arab objectives. It is an approach that embodies the essence of Arab cohesion. As representative of His Majesty the Sultan, His Highness Sayyid Asaad bin Tareq Al Said participated in the 26th Arab summit held at Sharm el-Sheikh in Egypt on 28 March 2015. The summit heading, "Seventy Years of Joint Arab Action", celebrated the 70th anniversary of the founding of the Arab League.

Ongoing activities in the International arena

Oman does not confine its attention, or its positive and active contributions, to matters of Arab and Gulf interest. It monitors closely a broader geopolitical horizon that spans Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas, as well as the activities of regional and international organisations of which the Sultanate is a member. It acts from a deep awareness of the close interconnection between the countries and peoples of the world and of the importance of cooperation in ensuring that regional peace, security and stability are not impacted adversely by what happens in other parts of the world.

The Sultanate supports the actions of the United Nations and its specialised organisations, such as UNESCO, the International Labour Organisation, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations Human Rights Council, and others. Its purpose is peace and understanding and a desire to create bridges of dialogue between peoples and cultures around the world. It is always eager to develop and deepen its relations



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with friendly countries, and seeks out grounds for bilateral exchange..

Oman has been looking eastwards to expand its ties with sister countries on the Asian continent. It builds relations on shared interests in the economic, trade and technological fields, underpinning these exchanges with a strong and well-founded base of mutual political respect and support.

To the west, Oman has not forgotten the historical foundations of its strong ties with Africa, and East Africa in particular. Oman's deep connection with Africa and profound influence on Islamic-African civilisation from that time live on in the strength of its relations today with many African countries, with which it maintains enduring bilateral relations across many areas of cooperation.

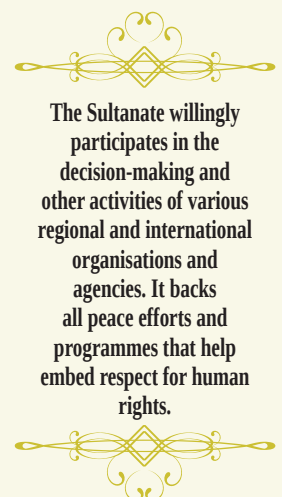
Even further afield, Oman maintains favourable and balanced ties with the United States, Britain and other countries of the European Union and with the Russian Federation and Latin America. His Majesty the Sultan is greatly respected and trusted by the leaders and peoples of these friendly countries.

The Sultanate willingly participates in the decision-making and other activities of various regional and international organisations and agencies. It backs all peace efforts and programmes that help embed respect for human rights. It participates in anti-terrorism efforts and in the fight against piracy.

Oman has ratified numerous agreements and memoranda of regional and international understanding. It ratified:

- the Arab Convention for the Transfer of Inmates at Penal and Correctional Institutions in the context of implementation of penal provisions governed by Royal Decree No. 25/2014;
- the Arab Convention for the Fight against Corruption;
- enforcement of the Memorandum of Understanding for implementation of the Ashgabat (Oman, Iran, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan) Agreement dated 6th August 2014;
- the Arab Convention on the Prevention of Information Technology Crimes by means of Royal Decree No. 5/2015;
- the Arab Convention against Transnational Organised Crime by means of Royal Decree No. 6/2015.

To copper-fasten its cooperation with neighbouring and friendly countries, the Sultanate has concluded a succession of bilateral agreements and memoranda of understanding covering political, economic, social, tourism and consular areas of activity.



MEDIA

As befits the general policy of the State, the Omani media has succeeded in keeping pace with fast-moving regional and international changes. Performance assessment is based on quality, variety and professionalism and geared to meeting standards expected by the public. Credibility and responsible broadcasting policy are central to the media agenda, while not ignoring the imperative of competitiveness. By this means the Omani media seeks to achieve the strategic objectives of disseminating and promoting national unity and consolidating the values of loyalty to the homeland and to His Majesty the Sultan.

Alongside these clear objectives, the national media sees itself in the role of protector of an ideal concept of citizenship, with its rewards and obligations, in which a sense of belonging is fostered, and a sense of investment in the future; in which the broadcast media fulfil their public service role effectively, engaging the public in constructive and critical dialogue, promoting the ethical value of work, highlighting young talent, and disseminating the core Omani values of tolerance, non-interference, respect for national sovereignty, good neighbourliness. It advocates an ethos of support for humanitarian and just causes, exercised through the appropriate international forums, and points out the error of sectarianism, racism and other negative and prejudicial attitudes.

The Omani media relies for the delivery of its message on a set of principles, the most important of which might be seen as adoption of a 'media language' characterised by clarity and credibility; a language that is objective and balanced in its reporting of regional and international



The Omani media relies for the delivery of its message on a set of principles, the most important of which might be seen as adoption of a 'media language' characterised by clarity and credibility.



developments, set against the reality of internal and external Omani policy constants. It relies also on training and continuous improvement of the capabilities of the Omani print, audio-visual and online media, so as to always keep pace with the speed of developments in communication and information technology.

These values have developed from the original vision of His Majesty at the outset of the modern renaissance, when he referred to the media as *“a mirror that reflects what is going on in the country, and this mirror must be clear and untainted, honest with itself and with its audience”*. This approach to national reporting has carried the Omani media, in its print, audio and visual formats, successfully in the fulfilment of its role of presenting and interpreting the modern Renaissance truthfully and objectively, without hype or fanfare. It has offered a ‘plain truth’ portrait of the Omani citizen,

To broaden acquaintance with the Sultanate’s scientific and cultural heritage, the Ministry of Information maintains a regular presence at international book fairs.

with all of his and her hopes and aspirations, set against the backdrop of a country transitioning smoothly from prosperous present to limitless future, led by its modern founder and leader, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos.

In this way the Omani media has become a bridge of communication and solidarity with friends, supportive of constructive dialogue with all parties. A clear interpreter of the Sultanate's policies and positions, it conveys its views on various issues and developments, reflecting in its delivery the calm and candour of the Omani character and tradition.

Interaction with the outside world

In its role of interpreting and broadcasting the narrative of the national development effort to as wide an audience as possible, of highlighting Oman's significant contribution to civilisation, the Ministry of Information has been an active presence at many international forums, introducing the Sultanate's outstanding cultural, educational, environmental and health achievements under His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said. The modern renaissance has brought Oman's culture and heritage out of the shadows and onto the world stage. One result of this attention has been to make the Sultanate an attractive and exotic tourist destination today.

The Ministry of Information participates in several international book fairs, in the Arab world and further afield. Its primary aim is to introduce the Sultanate and its scientific and cultural heritage, while emphasising the safety, stability and sophistication of Omani society. These factors are key to the development of Oman's full tourist potential, as they are to encouraging investment.

At home, the Ministry of Information, together with the Ministry of Heritage and Culture, Sultan Qaboos University, the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Education, collaborate to organise the Muscat International Book Fair, which draws publishing houses both from within the country and overseas. In addition, government ministries, agencies and libraries all participate actively in the annual Fair.

From 20-24 October 2014, the Ministry of Information hosted Oman Information Days in the French capital, Paris, drawing on the participation of leading lights in literature, the arts and the media. The Ministry, meanwhile, collaborated with the Ministry of Heritage and Culture to organise Culture Days in Brunei Darussalam from 11-15 November 2014 and a seminar, "Oman in the 21st Century", in Washington in December 2014.

Oman, represented by the Ministry of Information, was a guest of honour at the Seoul International Book Fair 2014 in the Republic of South Korea. Korea was acknowledging Oman's positive contributions to international relations, and in particular its own appreciation for the close relations maintained by the two countries across a range of exchanges. The Sultanate



The Omani media has become a bridge of communication and solidarity with friends, supportive of constructive dialogue with all parties. A clear interpreter of the Sultanate's policies and positions.



also participated in international book fairs in Paris, Alexandria, London and Frankfurt, Sharjah and Beirut. Alongside its sisters in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) it took part in media events sponsored by GCC member states. Up to mid-2015, these events had taken in nine European and Asian countries. Participation took the form of joint exhibitions, or representation through speakers presenting at seminars associated with these events.

The Sultanate was represented by the Ministry of Information at GCC-sponsored media conferences in the Gulf region and similar events sponsored by the Arab League and Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and actively monitored the implementation of decisions and recommendations taken at these events.

The Ministry of Information issues numerous books and publications, in multiple languages. It hosts journalists and media professionals from neighbouring and friendly countries throughout the year, especially when celebrating national events. It takes a proactive approach in keeping local and overseas audiences up to date on recent achievements, on aspects of development and construction. It organises or participates in exhibitions which showcase the many attractive features of investing in or visiting the Sultanate, highlighting its secure and stable climate.

ISBN

In order to benefit from all that is new in the field of publishing, in the context of encouraging original writing and the printing and the publishing industry generally, the Ministry of Information adopted the ISBN (International Standard Book Number) system for the Sultanate in 2013.

The ISBN system is a book identification system used in more than 173 countries around the world by which accredited agencies assign and oversee the allocation of ISBN numbers within a country. In Oman's case, the Ministry handles this function, ensuring that local authors and publishers benefit from their due presence in the international publishing world and market.

Training and preparation of specialised cadres

Training and qualification are cornerstones of the media industry, given the need for media professionals to interact comfortably with senior personnel in specialised fields. Training programmes are readily accessible to technical and editorial specialists working in areas of the media and ambitious to advance their skills and rise to prominence in their profession.

Local and overseas training schemes and courses of varying intensity are available to Oman's media personnel, as are exchange programmes in which trainees are assigned to selected Arab and foreign media organisations to gain practical experience in media work of every kind.

According to the Ministry of Information statistics there were 84 active



The Ministry of Information issues numerous books and publications in multiple languages. It hosts journalists and media professionals from neighbouring and friendly countries throughout the year.





The quest for ever evolving competencies and skills continues unabated.

training programmes on offer within the Sultanate in 2012, 88 in 2013 and 134 in 2014.

Meanwhile Omani media trainees participated in 12 overseas courses in 2012, 27 in 2013 and 32 in 2014.

The number of employed personnel benefiting from these qualification upgrades rose from 453 in 2012 to 571 in 2013 to 809 in 2014.

Oman News Agency

The Oman News Agency, established by Royal Decree No. 39/86 on 29th May 1986, is the official news agency of the government of Oman. A decade later, Royal Decree No. 43/97 founded the Oman Establishment for Press, News, Publication and Advertising (OEPNPA), which would henceforth incorporate the Oman News Agency. Finally, in 2006, Royal Decree No. 75/2006 transferred the Oman News Agency to the umbrella of the Ministry of Information with effect from 16th July 2006. Today the Oman News Agency falls directly under the Minister of Information and has an director general and editor to oversee its work and the implementation of its goals and functions.

The agency covers events in the political, economic and development areas of activity, as well as all other areas impacting the Sultanate, whether as participant or subject, in local, Gulf or Arab regional, or international levels. It also disseminates the Sultanate's positions on various issues and

According to the Ministry of Information statistics there were 84 active training programmes on offer within the Sultanate in 2012, 88 in 2013 and 134 in 2014.

developments, and provides press and audio-visual media channels with images and news reports.

The Oman News Agency reports in both Arabic and English, via satellite and via the agency's website.

ONA is always keen to develop its content and to expand distribution within and outside the Sultanate. Its website, in Arabic and English, was launched on 5th June 2014, offering fast turnover and easy online access to the latest agency news, image and feature offerings online.

The *sabaq* mobile phone service keeps subscribers on the go abreast of major news developments in politics, finance, sports and general news as they happen. The Local News Service offers special coverage of events in the Sultanate and is made available to member institutions, while providing background and information material to reporters and media outlets based in the Sultanate. The agency also archives data and images relating to the most important events of the day and all events covered by ONA, and facilitates access to this material for Arab and overseas journalists and media channels seeking to cover events taking place in the Sultanate.

During 2014, the Oman News Agency published 42,571 news items and 34,079 images, spanning a full range of activities and events.



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An editorial room at the Oman News Agency.



Omani Press

Oman's press seeks to keep pace with international developments in media and communications; while never losing touch with the concerns and aspirations of its Omani readership, with whom it maintains a close and transparent interaction.

A unique feature of the Omani press is its almost 100% ownership by the local private sector, with the exception of the Oman Establishment for Press, Publication and Advertising. The operational parameters of news organisations in the Sultanate, as well as the publication of newspapers and foundation of publishing houses, printing presses and advertising companies are governed by the Press and Publications Law, which was amended by means of Royal Decree No. 87/2004 to mandate that newspapers, magazines and media outlets be owned by Omani citizens or entities.

As of October 2014, there were 21 press institutions operating in the Sultanate, and 100 printing presses. Oman publishes nine daily newspapers in Arabic and English and more than 80 newspapers, magazines and periodicals – published daily, weekly, monthly, bimonthly, quarterly, biannually and annually. In addition, the number of free sports, entertainment and advertising publications is growing in response to the evolution of consumer demand. And several government ministries and agencies issue newsletters explaining or highlighting their public service activities or providing a perspective on issues of general or local public interest.

Muscat's five Arabic language dailies are "Oman", "Al Watan", "Al Shabiba", "Azzaman", and "Al Ruwaya". It also publishes four English language dailies, the "Oman Daily Observer", "Times of Oman", "Oman Tribune" and "Muscat Daily". In addition, several tabloid format weeklies dominated by entertainment, sport and advertising themes are delivered free of charge with their parent newspapers or distributed individually to outlets around the city or country.

In an endeavour to broaden communication with government and private media organisations and examine areas of potential concern and blockage impacting the journalistic profession, a campaign of field visits by external assessors has been ongoing at local press organisations. These visits facilitate a hearing of views and proposals, and an evaluation of necessary areas of training development, so that Oman's media personnel can keep up with rapid-fire developments in media technology and techniques.

Regular meetings with local newspaper editors are scheduled to discuss strategies of action and research adequate to meeting challenges faced by the media sector and it is at these regular strategy meetings that many of the proposals regarding re-training and skills upgrading are tabled and taken up.

Oman Establishment for Press, Publication and Advertising

The Oman Establishment for Press, Publication and Advertising (OEPPA) was launched by means of Royal Decree No. 43/97, a monumental piece of legislation which had the objective and outcome of establishing a formal channel for continual communication between the Omani public and their



As of October 2014, there were 21 press institutions operating in the Sultanate, and 100 printing presses. Oman publishes nine daily newspapers in Arabic and English.





Arab and regional surroundings. Its mission was to elevate the public consciousness, to enrich and enlighten the national culture and guide it towards a desire for ever more advanced levels of development.

The OEPPA aims to expand freedom of expression to an extent that illuminates but does not burn, that builds but does not annihilate, and to the extent that the individual senses his or her presence and place within the community. The OEPPA publishes two daily newspapers: the Arabic language "Oman" and the "Oman Observer" in English. It also publishes "Nizwa" magazine, a quarterly dealing with Omani, Arab and overseas literature and culture. "Nizwa" is highly regarded by its literary peer group at home and abroad.

The OEPPA is constantly looking out for new products to add to its stable of publications and for ways of enhancing its own performance as a publishing leader. Recent additions are "Hayati", a monthly covering women's affairs, the bi-monthly lifestyle magazine "Mazoon", and "Digital Oman", a quarterly dealing with information technology. The "Four Seasons" quarterly explores all aspects of tourism in Oman. OEPPA has entered the book publishing field, and its list includes regular reprints of the Basic Law of the State, which it distributes alongside "Oman", "Nizwa Capital of Islamic Culture", and a strategy booklet printed and distributed monthly.

The OEPPA has a strong nationwide distribution network and delivers not only its own diversified output, but other piggyback publications by arrangement..

The latest printing technology ensures a smooth flow of news.



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More programming space for talk shows in the television schedules.

Public Authority for Radio and TV

The Omani media maintains an intent focus on both individual and institutional performance. The Public Authority for Radio and Television (PART) was founded and refined under, respectively, Royal Decree No. 108/2010 of 19th October 2010 and Royal Decree No. 100/2011 of 22nd October 2011, and is a legal entity with financial and administrative independence. It is affiliated to the Council of Ministers, but with free discharge of its own resources.

The Public Authority has endeavoured to steadily increase the ratio of live programming on both radio and television. It is committed to the continuous development of media performance, particularly in radio and television. The digital studio complex has contributed in a major way to enhancing the sophistication of radio and television broadcasting operations, in terms of both its capacity and its potential, powered by digital technology for HDTV transmission.

The digital studio complex consists of four floors, with four studios for programme production, three for news production and three for broadcast. An additional studio for news broadcasts operates inside the news editorial space and three others serve for radio news broadcasts.

High-definition transmission began on 29th December 2013, initially for seven hours a day and building up to round the clock transmissions from the

The Public Authority for Radio and TV has endeavoured to steadily increase the ratio of live programming on both radio and television.

beginning of March 2014. News bulletins were first to go digital, graduating to full HDTV transmissions from the digital complex when it became fully operational.

The talk show represents an evolved and sophisticated expression of the broadcasting medium, engaging a spectrum of stakeholders in debate on political, economic or social issues of broad public concern. With this in mind, the Authority has been expanding the airtime given to talk shows of general and special interest, as typified by “Sabah wa Mesaa” (Morning and Evening), “Qahwat al Sabah” (Morning Coffee), “Sabah al Khairya Biladi” (Good Morning Country) and “Hadha al Sabah” (This Morning).

PART has also been working to extend and deepen its connection with the community. It has allocated both radio and television programming slots to social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

To extend its impact, PART has introduced an application for iPhone and Android smartphones that enables users to watch live broadcasts on the Public Channel and Sports Channel. A similar app is available for radio transmissions.

In March 2015, PART began using video wall technology to channel Oman sports events. Video wall is a new visual technique gaining ground with TV broadcasters for programmes such as those requiring parallel display of image and embedded commentary.

PART has opened offices in the governorates of Musandam and North Batinah, Buraimi and Dakhiliyah, to bring audio and visual coverage right up to date. This will be a shot in the arm for local event and activity organisers eager to make an impact nationally. The new offices are fitted with all the requisite technical equipment to provide mobile coverage of local community events and educational activities, and to produce field reports for news bulletins and audio-visual features.

A full satellite channel was leased to service the Sultanate’s full radio and TV package, broadcasting at 34 MHz. The new high quality channel absorbs all existing and new channel services, offering state of the art picture and sound quality and a greatly enhanced experience for Oman’s TV and radio audiences.

On 3-4 December 2014, the Authority organised a symposium on the voyage of the *MS Sultana* to New York, at which papers were presented illustrating aspects of the reign of Al Sayed Said bin Sultan, and outlining the reasons behind the *Sultana* voyage. A short docudrama accompanied the talks and offered footage from the archives on the historic 1840 voyage. A full documentary based on the outcome of the symposium is anticipated. On 1-5 February the Authority subsequently hosted the 11th Global Shortwave Coordination Conference, an annual assembly of users of shortwave radio frequencies. Shortwave frequencies are highly valued by long distance broadcasters, for their ability to reach audiences thousands of kilometres distant from source.



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Radio

The Sultanate of Oman broadcasts on five main radio channels differentiated by the interests and demographics of the target audience. Yet they project a common media message in that they all express aspects of a single Omani identity with shared traditions, values and aspirations. The five channels are, respectively, Public Radio, Youth Radio, Foreign Language Radio,, Holy Qur'an Radio and Classical Music Radio.

Sultanate of Oman Radio dates back to the early days of the Renaissance, the first broadcast medium of the modern era and consistently one of its most crucial interpreters. Its influence has been central to the emergence of the modern Omani citizen, with all his and her hopes and aspirations. The State has acknowledged its impact with support for advanced technology and for a professionalism that has made of Sultanate of Oman Radio a voice heard and respected in far distant corners of the world.

The station broadcasts round the clock, availing either of the satellite network assigned to this purpose, or of internet transmissions accessible via the station's website, <http://part.gov.om/omanradio/arabic>).

Oman's other radio stations operate varying broadcasting schedules as appropriate to their audiences.

Radio Oman

Oman Radio, broadcasting 24 hours nationwide on the main Sultanate of Oman Radio channel, operates from its main station headquarters, assisted by several sub-stations distributed throughout the provinces, on account of the geographical diversity of the Sultanate.

Radio Oman manages four programming schedules a year, each lasting three months. It operates a separate special schedule for occasional events, such as the month of Ramadan, the national feast days, Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, and sets aside time slots in its regular programming schedules for extended coverage of events such as the Muscat Festival and the Salalah Tourism Festival.

This channel relies largely on local material, which accounts for 90% of its daily programming content. Indeed a high degree of positive correlation exists between the content of Sultanate of Oman Radio and the progress of national development in its many aspects. It acts as a channel of communication between the public and government. It influences public opinion directly through its many well-loved programmes which have high listenership and an active public response. Public Radio covers local activities and events, as well as current affairs at home and abroad, and in a manner responsive to the concerns of all segments of Omani society. It maintains a strong network of correspondents in the Sultanate, as well as in the most important Arab and world capitals. It regularly calls on experts and specialists



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to shed light on significant events and developments in the Gulf, Arab and international arenas.

The Radio Oman system provides three news periods, each extending to approximately an hour. News bulletins include two focused on local affairs, an economic bulletin, an hourly news update of headline developments, and a multitude of development-focused, educational, recreational and other feature and magazine slots.

Youth Radio

Youth Radio has the largest target audience in the country, namely the youth sector. Its programming is focused on material that appeals to young people, with their broadening interests, modern outlook and technologically-centred communication choices. One objective of attracting young people is to engage them in the aspiration of developing their home country and contributing more to the national endeavour to this end.

Youth Radio programming is characterised by good range and high listenership among young people across the day's schedule. Its FM broadcasts are accessible virtually nationwide, as are its satellite broadcasts via Arabsat, Nilesat and Hotbird 4, as well as on the global information network at <http://part.gov.om/shababradio>.

Youth Radio has the largest target audience in the country, namely the youth sector.



Young Omanis learn their craft in the studios of Radio Sultanate of Oman.





FM Radio's content ranges from cultural and musical programmes, to variety, heritage and tourism, development and special interest features of interest or concern to various segments of the community.



FM Radio

Oman's foreign language radio broadcasts are an important means of communication with the country's expatriate communities, of interaction and dialogue with non-Arab communities resident in or visiting the Sultanate. English is the medium of this window on Oman.

Foreign language transmissions are broadcast on FM up to 19 hours a day, from 6.00 am until 1.00 am.

Content ranges from cultural and musical programmes, to variety, heritage and tourism, development and special interest features of interest or concern to various segments of the community. A portion of programming is devoted to interpreting aspects of Oman's renaissance and development trajectory.

The Sultanate's foreign radio channel conducts regular programme collaborations with similar channels in friendly countries of Europe and Asia, and also cooperates with radio stations in other Arab countries through the media exchange system and other formulas for Gulf and Arab cooperation.

Holy Qur'an Radio

Holy Qur'an Radio broadcasts on religious themes, especially on expressions of the wisdom of the Holy Qur'an, which promotes the tolerance, dialogue and moderation that are the true values of the Islamic religion.

Holy Qur'an Radio began in 2006, broadcasting seven hours a day, now extended to full twenty-four transmission on the FM wave band. Radio Holy Qur'an programmes can be accessed on satellite channels and on the global information network at <http://part.gov.om/quran>.

Classical Music Radio

In the ongoing development and diversification of Oman's media package, Radio Sultanate of Oman introduced Classical Music Radio to listening audiences on 22nd July 2010.

Classical Music Radio broadcasts at on the FM band (97 MHz in Muscat and 103.2 MHz in Salalah) as well as on Arabsat Badr 6, for 19 hours a day, from 6.00 am to 1.00 am.

Its programming content consists of structured selections of the most important contributions to classical music by the world's greatest musical geniuses. These music-centred programmes are preceded and concluded by Arabic and English language summaries of the pieces presented. Classical Music Radio has a broad target audience of Arab and non-Arab music lovers, its message rooted in the universal wisdom that music is a language that transcends geographical, linguistic and cultural boundaries.



Television

The Sultanate's visual broadcast media have as a core mission to present an encompassing view of the achievements of the modern renaissance, in particular as they relate to Omani society. Running through its programming schedule is the constant theme of how Omani society has sustained itself and pursued its most evolved aspirations through history; how Omanis see themselves today, how they perceive in their worldview the values of citizenship and moderation, of tolerance and dialogue with other peoples and civilisations. A guiding principle of Oman's televisual media is to further understanding, peace and cooperation for the good of all nations and peoples, in the region and beyond.

Sultanate of Oman TV broadcasts nationwide and can also be picked up around the world, either via satellite cable TV or via the global information network at <http://part.gov.om/ar/web/omantv>.

A recent addition to the TV broadcasting service is access to the General Channel and Sports Channel via mobile phone. Round the clock transmissions continue.

In 2013 Sultanate of Oman TV initiated a programming overhaul which saw its schedule upgraded in a major way in terms of content and artistic form.

Oman TV uses technology to get its message across.



The Sultanate's visual broadcast media have as a core mission to present an encompassing view of the achievements of the modern renaissance, in particular as they relate to Omani society.



A new format in news programming has opened a window to more constructive dialogue with viewing audiences. The new format adjusts the focus towards local affairs and international issues as seen through this lens. Typical of this new approach is the popular programme, Current Affairs. Under the Spotlight, meanwhile is a spinoff from the daily Issue of the Day, previously featured as part of the News at Ten broadcast. Oman News airs at 5.00 pm and consists of a news bulletin accompanied by local reports, while “Provincial News” covers official events, as well as social and cultural news and features from around the governorates.

Keeping pace with the media boom the world is currently experiencing, in particular the explosion in social media such as Twitter, Oman’s audio and visual media have opted for an online presence via the global information network, with the aim of capturing a broader viewing and listening audience at home and abroad.

Oman TV covers national, religious, economic, social and cultural events, in addition to Arab and regional developments, relying on a network of resident correspondents in Arab and non-Arab capitals. It also maintains a list of experts and specialists it can call on for contributions to talk shows and coverage of important events locally and in the Gulf, Arab and international arenas.

Sports channel

The Oman Sports Channel was launched on 1st January 2013, replacing the Second Programme, which had been on the air since 2006. Since the beginning of 2015 it has been broadcasting round the clock, extended from its initial daily schedule of 19 hours.

The Sports Channel is operating out of a new video wall studio, which uses an optical technique gaining currency in the world of visual broadcasting. The technique is particularly effective in sports programming, where parallel displays of image and commentary are becoming increasingly popular.

Oman Sports does not restrict its coverage to football, but offers an extensive package of news and feature content covering all sports, tailored to local audience interest, although the emphasis is on local sports activity.

Oman Direct

The Oman Direct channel, which came on the air in January 2014, has a broad compass, extending to live coverage of most local and international political, social, cultural, artistic, religious, sports and international events. By the end of June 2014 it had covered 116 important events, local, regional and international, and is looking to expand this range as a contribution to support and project Oman’s cultural, social and tourist activity both at home and abroad.



The Sports Channel is operating out of a new video wall studio, which uses an optical technique gaining currency in the world of visual broadcasting.



Radio and television broadcasting and the private sector

To stay ahead in the media race, given its powerful social influence, the Private Institutions Radio and Television Law was declared in 2004, providing opportunities for the Omani private sector to enter the broadcasting industry, enabling private institutions to own and manage radio and television channels. The principal beneficiaries of this broadening of scope are the Sultanate's listeners and viewers.

The result has been several new radio channels offering programmes on the FM wave band, operated by the Omani private sector. These channels are:

- Radio Hala in Arabic, which is owned by Media Entertainment Network.
- Radio Hi FM in English, also owned by the Media Entertainment Network.
- Radio Al Wasil in Arabic - which is owned by Sabco Media .
- Radio Merge FM in English, also owned by Sabco.

The Magan Channel is the only television channel owned privately. It has been broadcasting around the clock since 2008.

Private radio stations have entered the expanding broadcasting arena in Oman.





Security



Security:

Keeping stability abreast of development

At the heart of safety and security is a confident citizen

From the very outset of the Renaissance, from the very date it was launched on 23 July 1970, every area of national activity has combined and collaborated in the overall, comprehensive project of development. Major projects have targeted success as the objective for all citizens of Oman, from provision of the fundamentals of a comfortable and healthy life to achieving for Oman a deserved place of significance among nations and peoples.

Given these remarkable and valuable accomplishments and services, it was necessary to apply foresight in ensuring their protection and to build strong defences to ward off any aggressive intentions that might seek to undermine them.

Wise leadership recognised the need for an efficient and well equipped police force and army. Training was judged paramount, as was the need to boost the capabilities of all units with modern and highly efficient weaponry and equipment. The result is a reassured population living in a climate of stability, secure in the care of a well-armed network of professionals trained and motivated to defend their country.

The Sultanate has in this way become a bastion of security, safety and stability in this vital region of the world. The slogan '*Oman balad al Aman*' (Oman, safe haven) describes the simple truth of its reputation in times of crisis, a reputation that has raised it to high position on the Global Peace Index as one of the more stable countries in the Middle East and indeed in the world at large.

The Sultan's Armed Forces

Protecting the achievements and gains of the Renaissance

The Sultan's Armed Forces represent at once a crowning achievement and also a bulwark of Oman's modern renaissance. They are constantly being upgraded, so as to maintain the level of readiness seen as crucial by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. His Majesty is shrewdly aware of the importance of keeping the armed forces fighting fit: modern, well-trained and disciplined, technically versatile. The SAF is competent in the ways of modern warfare, able and willing to meet the responsibility of defending the national homeland. This responsibility grows and changes with the challenges facing the region and the world; and Oman's air, sea and land defences constitute together a sleek and effective force in their readiness to meet and defeat all military challenges.



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Oman has maintained a strategy of not sparing on the quality and technical superiority of the weapons needed by the SAF to fulfil their mission, keeping them constantly supplied with tanks, armoured personnel carriers, missile and artillery systems, armoured vehicles and a full range of fighter and transport aircraft and helicopters. The SAF have also been provided with a naval fleet that includes landing vessels, frigates and advanced speedboats, in recognition of their critical function. Equally crucial to its success are the personnel, whose peak performance is maintained by regular training in weaponry and the arts of defence, as well as in the most sophisticated technological equipment available to them, which they handle with confidence and professional ease.

The principal weapon at the heart of the strategy to develop and arm the Sultan's Armed Forces is its human resources, the soldiers and officers of the Omani air force, army and navy, and of the Royal Guard. Targeted training is tailored to achieve maximum efficiency in performance, to create a well organised, well equipped force skilled in the use of common weapons systems. The brave men and women of the SAF can compete with the finest and smartest modern fighting elites in handling every new hi-tech weapon and device produced by the military industry.

Royal Army of Oman

After many years of upgrading and modernisation during the four and a half decades of the Renaissance, the Royal Army of Oman (RAO) has become a strong military force, a source of pride for Oman. Its brigades, infantry formations, and manoeuvre and support wings have been supplied with high-tech weaponry. In the meantime, special training programmes are being conducted to enhance the capability of military personnel in handling all types of arms and introduce them to the latest systems applicable in war. These systems are put into action during military exercises conducted to test their field readiness.

Army units and formations are constantly monitored for combat fitness, and are at all times ready, equipped and able to meet their national obligations. The result is a highly integrated, high-performance force, well trained in the methods of modern warfare, disciplined and tested, with efficient operational, administrative and technical systems in place; armed with the technical firepower and skilled manpower needed to meet all eventualities.

Overall, the RAO has undergone major development in organisation, training, installations and service facilities and advanced communications.

Its arsenal is constantly reviewed and restocked as the weapons industry advances towards new frontiers in defence, and upgrades are selected and adapted to the operational requirements of the fully integrated system favoured by Oman's military strategy. Combat units are streamlined for more efficient deployment, and new elite special-purpose units created and professionally trained.



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Sophisticated equipment and weaponry enhance the combat efficiency of the Royal Army of Oman.



The Royal Air Force of Oman .. modern, disciplined and well-equipped.



The Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) has evolved into a modern air force, equipped with a top-of-the-range arsenal, coupled with training programmes that have raised the proficiency and capability of its personnel.



Royal Air Force of Oman

The Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) has evolved into a modern air force, equipped with a top-of-the-range arsenal, coupled with training programmes that have raised the proficiency and capability of its personnel. The RAFO was recently supplied with new fighters, helicopters, logistical transport aircraft, and air defence systems, including radars, anti-aircraft batteries, missile launchers and warfare simulation programmes.

RAFO has concluded several forward-looking agreements geared towards meeting challenges down the road, as well as at raising current technical capability. It operates air bases fitted with state-of-the-art systems capable of functioning in all circumstances and situations.

The air force maintains its ready alert status with regular weapons and equipment upgrades, as well as enhanced logistics and manpower skills. This includes efficiency and deployment tests to assess combat readiness, as a result of which Oman's skies are kept clear and free of intrusion. Because of its crucial national defence role, the air force is guaranteed all the fire power it needs. It has an additional civilian role to play in search and rescue operations, as well as transport and logistics services to far flung mountain communities as required.

The RAFO fleet has been expanded to include Casa transport planes from

Spain, along with C-130J Super Hercules military transports and Eurofighter Typhoon multirole fighters. Recently commissioned Hawk Mark 166 aircraft are scheduled to enter service in 2017.

The Royal Navy of Oman

Due to Oman's strategic location and the fact that the Sultanate supervises one of the most important waterways in the world – the Strait of Hormuz – the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) has been playing a critical role in safeguarding the country's strategic security and economic interests through the RNO's permanent presence in Oman's territorial waters.

The RNO fleet boasts a range of sophisticated equipment and weapons, in addition to gunboats and fast vessels, including missile backup, training, cargo and hydrographical survey vessels. The flotilla lends support to the division's patrol boats in their mission of securing Oman's coastline and territorial waters or monitoring the safe passage of ships and oil tankers through the strategic Strait of Hormuz. Besides providing security for sea transport of SAF units along the Omani coast, RNO vessels protect the Sultanate's precious fishing grounds and carrying out joint amphibious and marine transport operations.

The Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) has been playing a critical role in safeguarding the country's strategic security and economic interests through the RNO's permanent presence in Oman's territorial waters.

The Royal Navy of Oman .. firepower and speed in a fleet with muscle and flexibility.



The year 2015 saw completion of the Khareef project, with final delivery of *Al Rasikh*, the third and last of three Khareef class corvettes characterised by advanced operational efficiency; as well as the launch and naming of RNO vessel *Al Seeb*, the first delivery in the *Al Ufuq* (Horizon) project. Under the *Al Ufuq* project, the RNO will be supplied with four patrol vessels, which will add support and efficiency to coastal patrol and protection.

On 16th November 2014 the RNO took delivery of the RNOV *Shabab Oman II*, which replaces its sail training predecessor in its principal function of bringing Oman's message of harmony and goodwill to the peoples of the world. The *Shabab Oman II* will represent the Sultanate at international marine forums and festivals, as well as fulfilling its sail-training tasks and sustaining Oman's long maritime heritage and links with the sea and with the arts of navigation.



Royal Guard of Oman

Like other wings of the Armed Forces, the Royal Guard of Oman (RGO), which is an important component of the Sultanate's modern military system, has been accorded top priority by His Majesty the Sultan, Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. The RGO enjoys a high level of combat proficiency and capability and has a full range of infantry and support units with advanced systems and equipment, as well as educational, technical and administrative units. It attaches special significance to training programmes, which are designed to keep personnel up to speed with handling the advanced equipment with which the RGO has been supplied.

The Royal Guard Technical College provides the RGO and other



The Royal Guard of Oman (RGO), which is an important component of the Sultanate's modern military system, has been accorded top priority by His Majesty the Sultan, Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. The RGO enjoys a high level of combat proficiency and capability.



government establishments with technical personnel qualified on a par with international standards. In addition, the RGO's Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra, with its complement of talented young Omani musicians, has uplifted the Sultanate's reputation at many international events.

The RGO units have had a strong presence at national and international occasions in which they have participated. The Red Helmets and Free Fall parachute teams take part in public events.

The RGO's cavalry team stages displays of horsemanship and takes part in show jumping competitions, graduation ceremonies and other events of national and military importance.

The Royal Guard of Oman has achieved new heights of efficiency and combat capability.



The Ministry of Defence makes a crucial contribution to the country's overall development endeavour.



The Engineering Services division also offers logistical backup to projects through, for instance, its construction equipment project, which brings cutting edge design and equipment support from its own resources to projects throughout the Sultanate.



Engineering Services

The Defence Ministry's Engineering Services division plays a vital role in providing technical and engineering backup during military exercises. It also provides essential services such as water and electricity supply, wastewater and infrastructure utilities at military camps, air/naval bases and other installations. The Engineering Services division is constantly increasing the output capacity of power supply stations at military sites.

The division also prepares plans and supervises construction projects and maintenance works, including the upkeep of infrastructural facilities and utilities. As a contribution from the Ministry of Defence to the Sultanate's general development plans, the Engineering Services division builds roads in various regions across the country.

The Engineering Services division also offers logistical backup to projects through, for instance, its construction equipment project, which brings cutting edge design and equipment support from its own resources to projects throughout the Sultanate.

The National Survey Authority

The National Survey Authority (NSA) is the central body for the production of military and civilian maps. It also carries out aerial photography operations in the Sultanate, sets the criteria for topographical surveys, maintains the

National Geographical Archive, and supplies aerial charts and geographical data. It has an extensive range of modern printing and programming equipment for the production of maps, charts and photographs, as well as ultra-high precision satellite survey systems and standard and analytical graphic drawing facilities. The NSA maintains survey networks and provides geographical support and training in mapping and production.

The Institute of Survey Sciences and Map Production, which is based at the NSA's premises, confers national diplomas in surveying and mapping to military and civilian personnel qualified in those fields. It also holds specialist courses in the subjects.

Military Medical and Social Services

The SAF Medical Services division offers first-class medical services to members of the armed forces and their families and – in addition to contributing to the development of the country's health sector – SAF Medical Services also provide medical care and support for evacuation operations, as well as for general emergency cases through their Flying Doctor service. With state-of-the-art medical equipment, the SAF Medical Services are well qualified to carry out medical diagnoses and examinations, laboratory analyses, surgical operations and other forms of treatment.



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The SOAF medical services have access to the very latest medical equipment.



The opening of the Armed Forces Hospital in Salalah on 3rd September 2014 was the latest major contribution to the nation's medical services, bringing it ever closer to their goal of providing the very best healthcare offering to personnel and employees of the armed forces in Salalah.

The SAF Medical Services School supplies the SAF with qualified medical and technical personnel. The Armed Forces Hospital in Al Khoudh is a particular focus of the Sultan's Armed Forces for its service role to military personnel and their families. In addition, SAF units and formations at different sites have direct access to military hospitals and health centres which are manned by qualified medical teams, lending support to the country's overall health sector.

The SAF Social Services division provides social welfare for officers and men of the SAF and their families in the form of housing loans and supervised building works, as well as care and rehabilitation services for disabled former military personnel, arrangements for Umrah pilgrimages and visits to veterans at Eid and on official occasions. They also organise visits to the sick, injured and the families of deceased ex-servicemen.

It is worth noting that the Sultanate is a permanent member of the Union of Arab Societies of Veterans and War Victims. Oman is represented in the Arab Union by the SAF Social Services department.

Morale Guidance

The Morale Guidance department is responsible for maintaining morale and highlighting the patriotic role of the SAF. Its duties cover running the military media, as well as national media coverage of social, cultural and sporting events and activities in the media, e.g. publications, radio and TV services. Such publications and programmes help raise levels of cultural appreciation and awareness within the serving military. Audio-visual material of concern and interest to the military is prepared for programming in collaboration with the Public Authority of Radio and TV.

The department also promotes religious events, alongside its functions and duties of providing education and guidance and preparing SAF reports and journals for publication. It organises the participation of officers and men in the Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha festivities in the form of field visits to work sites, along with military hospital visits to SAF staff and family members undergoing treatment. Morale guidance is a core theme in its media projects and information campaigns, in which it always engages the most sophisticated media tools available.

The Morale Guidance department also coordinates the annual Military Hajj Mission and organizes cultural competitions for personnel of the Ministry of Defence, the SAF and the RGO, in addition to other public awareness events such as the activities of the GCC Traffic Week. This department also keeps the SAF archives up-to-date because of their importance in documenting the part played by SAF since the outset of the Renaissance.



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Ministry of Defence Pension Fund

The Ministry of Defence actively manages its own pension fund, established and monitored with clear and specific objectives. Its success is in part due to the manufacturing and service enterprises it founded. It also invests in real estate with demographic mobility as a goal, and in securities through the Muscat Securities Market.

On 26th January 2014, the foundation stone of the Nizwa Grand Mall was laid, a major new addition to the Fund's long-term investments and one that fits the Ministry's broad strategy of paralleling the national trend towards diversification.

Two months later, on 23rd March 2014, another foundation stone was laid, initiating construction work on the 'Green Mountain' tourist resort in Al Dakhiliyah. This massive project further expands the Fund's large-scale investment portfolio, and confirms its commitment to the Sultanate's focus on tourism and other avenues to direct recreational and commercial traffic, and increased revenue streams, into Oman.

The shift towards active diversification into new economic sectors continues, and a third major investment was initiated on 26th March 2015, with the inauguration of construction works on a manufacturing facility for the production of light arms ammunition in Wilayat Sumail. This will be the first plant of its kind in the Sultanate, and aims to meet fully the light ammunition needs of the SAF and other security services.

The Ministry of Defence actively manages its own pension fund, established and monitored with clear and specific objectives. Its success is in part due to the manufacturing and service enterprises it founded.

Military shopping malls provide goods and services at discounted prices to personnel of the Ministry of Defence and the Sultan's Armed Forces.



On 4th May 2015, the Ministry of Defence opened the Al Bandar military commercial complex, which retails basic goods and supplies at discounted rates to employees of the Ministry of Defence and armed forces.

Sultan's Armed Forces Museum

The Sultan's Armed Forces Museum at Bait al Falaj in Muscat Governorate chronicles Oman's military history and the formidable contribution it has made to stability, past and present. The Museum has sections devoted to armaments used over the centuries and is a treasure-house for history buffs with a special interest in military matters. As a facility to foreign language visitors, the information is presented in several languages. The Museum also maintains a website and publishes pamphlets of interest to historians and others.

Information Technology Services have seen impressive progress, thanks to an effective programme of training for personnel. Tested training programmes have been employed with superior success in all departments and divisions of the Ministry of Defence and the SAF.

The Ministry of Defence and SAF together launched the Ministry's Sahab (Cloud) Project on 28th January 2015. The portal will offer personnel a raft of electronic services, and will also be available online to citizens, residents, visitors and other interested persons, as well as government and private institutions.

Recruitment of Omani youth

Recruitment and hiring are leading priorities of the Ministry of Defence, SAF and Royal Guard and large numbers of young Omani job seekers are constantly being absorbed into their ranks. Numerous facilities for the training and further education of young officers and non-commissioned recruits exist on site at



The Ministry of Defence and SAF together launched the Ministry's Sahab (Cloud) Project on 28th January 2015. The portal will offer personnel a raft of electronic services.



units and bases and branches of the military. All military service categories are covered -scientific, technical and technological. The National Defence College was established with the purpose of preparing a generation of senior military and civilian staff and educating them to specialist level in the skills and qualities necessary and effective for strategic leadership.

The Command and Staff College, meanwhile, is a beacon of military education in the Sultanate. Graduates earn a bachelor's degree in military science, and keep the SAF, the Royal Guard and other security agencies supplied with personnel well qualified in leadership and in the comfortable exercise of leadership roles into the future.

The Technical Military College, which was officially inaugurated on 25 February 2015, is an outstanding facility, and benefits from the finest academic

The Technical Military College is one of the Sultanate's leading technical education institutions.



The Sultan's Armed Forces and Royal Guard of Oman maintain a permanent presence locally and internationally.

instruments available today to enable it to meet its curriculum needs fully and adequately. The College offers advanced diplomas and bachelor degrees, thereby contributing to absorbing the output of the public education system into third level study, as well as demonstrating a high degree of Omanisation within its own cohort of academic staff and support personnel.

Under the constant theme of raising combat efficiency through continual training and field testing of army units, the SAF and Royal Guard oversee regular land, sea and air exercises, both separately and in the form of joint exercises with Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members and other sister countries.

Regional and International events

The Sultan's Armed Forces attach great importance to sports as a means of



ensuring their personnel maintain a high level of physical fitness and combat capability. The SAF has several sports associations and facilities.

The Sultanate, represented by the SAF, won elections for hosting the World Military Football Championships 2017 during voting at the 69th meeting of the general assembly of the Military World Games Council (CISM = Conseil International du Sport Militaire). The meeting was held on 7th May 2014 in Ecuador in the presence of representatives of 87 countries.

The SAF's Athletics Team and the National Parachuting Team of the Sultan of Oman Parachutes at the Royal Army of Oman (RAO) added to their many outstanding achievements to date: the Parachuting team won first and third places respectively at the ASEAN and Merkedda skydiving events in the individual category, and third place in Asia, competing with 15 teams in 123 jumps. They took first place again at the 7th Jeddah International Skydiving Championship. October 2011 saw

the launch of the National Women's Skydiving Team. All in all the Sultan's Armed Forces have fed local clubs and national teams with a steady stream of talent in many sports, registering successes both locally and internationally.

The SAF and RGO include in their ranks a number of bands which have made a strong presence on national and international occasions. The Royal Army of Oman Music Band has recorded many firsts in competitive events, as has the RAFO Pipe Band, which appears regularly at festivals internationally, presenting its traditional Omani song and dance repertoire. The Royal Navy of Oman band worked to revive Oman's seafaring heritage through its exhibitions on board RNOV *Shabab Oman*. The Royal Guard of Oman's band is especially admired by members of the public attending local, national and international events.



The Sultan's Armed Forces attach great importance to sports as a means of ensuring their personnel maintain a high level of physical fitness and combat capability.



ROYAL OMAN POLICE

Effort and determination to maintain security and stability

The maintenance of security and stability is the overriding objective of the Royal Oman Police. It sees its mission as fulfilling the responsibilities delegated to it by the directives of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, whose absolute conviction is that security is the cornerstone of growth and prosperity, and maintenance of the achievements thereby gained.

The ROP is proud of what it has accomplished to date, of the many advances it has registered in delivering its services. The ROP is committed to achieving the highest levels of public safety and security in Oman, for which it engages every material resource available to a modern police force; in order to build its strategic and scientific planning capability to a level capable of handling the phenomenal changes and security requirements the world is witnessing today.

The ROP has introduced several new and innovative projects nationwide, and these will expand and streamline its services to citizens and residents. During 2015, police service buildings were opened in Al-Suwaiq and Barka, Shinas Jalan Bani Bu Ali and Adam, Yanqul, Bahla, Thumrait and Khoudh. These centres will provide 'one-stop-shop' services related to passports and residency, and matters of civil status and traffic. Work is under way to establish geographically distributed provincial centres, with police sub-stations and residential complexes, so that serving ROP personnel may have adequate housing in all areas.

Because security is an integrative process which functions best where there is good coordination between the various police units joining forces to maintain homeland security and to protect society, the ROP has given new powers to the Directorate of Police Aviation to strengthen it in its supportive role to other police units.

Meanwhile the Royal Oman Police Coast Guard have been supplied



The ROP is proud of what it has accomplished to date, of the many advances it has registered in delivering its services. The ROP is committed to achieving the highest levels of public safety and security in Oman.



with fully equipped speedboats to boost their efficiency in monitoring the long Omani coast and preventing smuggling, as well as responding rapidly to SOS calls from fishermen stranded at sea. The new Coast Guard headquarters, which is currently under construction in Sidab, Muscat Governorate, is one of the most important projects yet undertaken in support of the work of the Coast Guard in the Sultanate.

Training and Qualification

The ROP attaches great importance to training. At the Sultan Qaboos Academy for Police Sciences and other training centres, police cadets undergo basic training on joining the force; this is then extended into further courses prior to their taking up duty at their respective postings.

In late 2014 the new ROP Officers' Institute campus building in Wattayah, Muscat Governorate, was inaugurated, adding needed capacity amid a rising trend in the number of trainees applying and needed to serve current and future requirements in the ROP ranks nationwide.

The ROP provides healthcare and treatment services for all employees of the police force and their families. These services are provided through the

The Royal Oman Police play a vigilant role in ensuring traffic safety on Oman's roads.



The ROP has introduced several new and innovative projects nationwide, and these will expand and streamline its services to citizens and residents.



The ROP is at the forefront of government establishments that support Digital Oman Society strategies and initiatives aimed at developing e-government in the Sultanate.

As women swell the ranks of the police force, they are increasingly visible in policing tasks.

Police Hospital and its associated clinics and through the mobile hospital. These facilities offer top level care to beneficiaries. An Emergency Wing was added to the Police Hospital to deal with urgent cases. Meanwhile the new Police Hospital will ease the load on the existing facility as the number of police personnel serving with the ROP rises to new highs, without compromising the quality of care.

The ROP is at the forefront of government establishments that support Digital Oman Society strategies and initiatives aimed at developing e-government in the Sultanate. The ROP's website (www.rop.gov.om) has been upgraded to handle services such as smart visa application forms and payment of traffic fines, as well as offering updates to visitors about the services officered by the Royal Oman Police.

The ROP recently launched its own SMS service in cooperation with Oman Telecommunications Company (Omantel). The new service will speed up certain procedures such as queries about visas and the processing of traffic offences. In the near future, the ROP will introduce other SMS-based services, including notification about passport expiry or expiry of civil identification cards or expatriate residency cards.





In January 2015, the ROP introduced the new biometric passport, which can be read electronically, an innovation which will speed up processing dramatically at border crossings. The biometric or e-passport stores the bearer's personal identification details in the form of fingerprint and electronic signature on an internal chip and these markers, along with image recognition from the photograph, create a high degree of identity verification. Among the security specifications stored on the e-passport chip are data encrypted algorithmically for additional authentication. The passport data is linked to the e-gate control system. Mobile units will facilitate registration, which may also be effected by way of an online application form.

In its contribution to the trend towards e-government, the Royal Oman Police has opened a passenger information centre at Muscat International Airport to facilitate the movement of passengers. The latest technology available in this field was acquired and the centre operates round-the-clock, receiving and analysing the data of all passengers and aircraft crew entering and leaving or transiting the Sultanate through its international airports, as well as tourists arriving in the Sultanate by cruise ship through

The high efficiency of services delivered by the Royal Oman Police relies on qualified, well-equipped personnel.



In January 2015, the ROP introduced the new biometric passport, which can be read electronically.





Modern technology supports better services.

its seaports. Data is processed prior to arrival, using the advanced passenger information system.

The e-visa, e-passport and customs projects are some of the Sultanate's most significant technical initiatives. Other services include the computerisation of the police stations - which will give ROP staff instant access to the police databases while they perform their daily duties. The ROP is also exploring the potential of GIS technology in supporting criminal investigations work and developing fingerprint identification systems.

All of these endeavours by the ROP to keep pace with the progress of 'Digital Oman', the strategy of moving all departments of the administration towards full e-government status, have not gone unrewarded, and in 2014 the work of the ROP in this context was recognised twice in the Sultan Qaboos Awards for Excellence in e-Government.

Among the nine government categories, the ROP won the Best e-Readiness Award; and it won again for the best electronic service provided to the government sector, with its automatic inter-governmental connection inside the Sultanate, as well as its external link with the United Arab Emirates.



A campaign is ongoing to reduce the number of road accidents by identifying the root causes and assessing the action being taken by the relevant traffic authorities to improve road safety in Oman generally and to identify the strengths and weaknesses of current practices.



Road Safety

A campaign is ongoing to reduce the number of road accidents by identifying the root causes and assessing the action being taken by the relevant traffic authorities to improve road safety in Oman generally and to identify the strengths and weaknesses of current practices. At issue is the removal of existing obstacles to safer roads and identification of the best short, medium and long term strategies to pursue both to reduce the number of fatalities and injuries from road accidents, and to establish the services, procedures and mechanisms needed to enhance the work of the road safety authorities in the Sultanate.

In this context, a nationwide awareness campaign is being managed by the ROP with the slogan “Thank you ... for reducing speed”. The campaign focuses on the dangers of speed and targets all segments of society, and its public and private institutions. The campaign has reduced the mortality rate over the past two years by up to 30%.

Specialised police units

The ROP has set up a number of specialist police units to keep abreast of economic, social and demographic growth in the Sultanate. These units,

Traffic awareness campaigns reduce the number and severity of road accidents.



which carry out specific, specialised tasks, include the Special Task Force, which provides leadership across a range of tasks and duties, most notably patrol duty in the provinces, so as to strengthen the local police presence round-the-clock. An immediate goal is to extend the reach of the Special Task Force to all governorates, as needed, to spread the umbrella of full security and safety to Oman's remotest areas. A recent support facility in the form of a training unit for Special Task Force personnel was opened at Al Ansab in Muscat Governorate. Meanwhile, a back-up unit of the Force has been established in Sohar to support the Batinah North Police Command in the conduct of their security functions.

In addition to patrols by the emergency police patrol service known as "Najda", and patrols of vital installations, the Women's Traffic Patrol service and the Police Juvenile Service, the management of the Police Aviation segment has been upgraded, along with its facilities and special equipment. This latter includes the provision of a new fleet of modern all-weather aircraft suited to the task of defending Oman's territorial waters.

The Police Cavalry Unit carries out preventive inspection operations in which it uses police dogs for tracking and to search for explosives, narcotics and contraband items.

The Police Coastguard division has been provided with the most advanced fast patrol boats to help assist its anti-smuggling and anti-trafficking duties and to help it maintain the safety of the Sultanate's coastline.

The campaign to combat the use of illegal drugs and psychotropic substances, to follow up on drug offences and to bring those involved in the traffic and abuse of such substances to justice, enacted in concert with other stakeholders, has resulted in an improved crime detection rate insofar as concerns smuggling and drug-related trafficking and abuse.

The Airport Security Directorate General works to upgrade the performance of police personnel at airports after providing these personnel with the required expertise and skills to better perform their duties.

The Directorate-General of Civil Status records the civil data of nationals and residents. These include births, marriages, divorces and deaths of Omanis and births and deaths of foreigners resident in the Sultanate, as well as marriages and divorces involving foreigners if one of the parties is Omani. The Directorate-General also issues proof of status documents to nationals and residents including birth and death certificates and ID and residence cards.

The National Search and Rescue Team has been formed as a new unit



A recent support facility in the form of a training unit for Special Task Force personnel was opened at Al Ansab in Muscat Governorate. Meanwhile, a back-up unit of the Force has been established in Sohar .



to address natural disasters and rescue persons trapped beneath collapsed buildings, a task that requires top expertise and special equipment.

Policewomen play a vital role alongside men in the services offered to the public by the Royal Oman Police and as an inseparable component of the force protecting Omani society.

Directorate General of Civil Defence

The accomplishments of the civil defence sector culminated in the establishment of the Public Authority for Civil Defence and Ambulance (PACDA) under Royal Decree No. 3/2013, issued on 8th January 2013. Affiliated to the ROP, this authority helps preserve human and material resources and protect public and private properties.

The PACDA spares no effort in imparting a “culture of safety” to different segments of society. The Authority does its best to send advisory messages and alerts to every citizen and resident in Oman as part of its duty to communicate with members of the public and help them to act promptly during crises.



The accomplishments of the civil defence sector culminated in the establishment of the Public Authority for Civil Defence and Ambulance (PACDA) Affiliated to the ROP, this Authority helps preserve human and material resources and protect public and private properties.



The Public Authority for Civil Defence and Ambulance serves a noble and humanitarian national function.





Human Resources



Human Resources: **the citizen at the heart of development**

An abiding concern for all that serves the welfare of the men, women and children of Oman, for what will further the development of their strengths and maximise their ability to contribute to and share in the advancement of society, has been a central theme and driver of the Renaissance. His Majesty Sultan Qaboos has returned to this refrain repeatedly in his addresses and interviews, wherever the occasion presents.

It has always been His Majesty's contention that man is at the heart of all progress, both its motivation and its goal. If every individual can be encouraged to reach their full potential, to advance in education and intellectual enrichment, then he or she may expect a constantly improving quality of life and health such as will equip them well for the tasks they face. With every passing decade since the launch of the Renaissance, the Sultanate has made quantum leaps forward in this regard.

As main priorities of the Renaissance in reaching its target of sustainable development, free education and healthcare were extended to all citizens throughout the Sultanate. Access to education at all levels and specialties was encouraged, as well as to opportunities in training and rehabilitation, to areas of qualification in universities, colleges and specialist institutes. Moreover, career and job opportunities commensurate with the skills and knowledge thus acquired are constantly made available. These opportunities are the practical expression of the ideal, of the goal to offer this and future generations a fair chance to attain a dignified life for themselves; with their basic needs taken care of in the form of accessible health centres and referral hospitals and all of the facilities that render life supportable and stable and prosperous and socially comfortable.

During his speech before the annual session of the Council of Oman on 12 November 2012, Sultan Qaboos noted that the Sultanate would be forging ahead with social development programmes. He instructed the government to afford its full attention to the issue, saying: ".....As the



As main priorities of the Renaissance in reaching its target of sustainable development, free education and healthcare were extended to all citizens throughout the Sultanate.





Record your dreams today to see them incarnate tomorrow.

basic infrastructure approaches completion, we have directed the government to focus in its future plans on social development, particularly in aspects which relate to citizen welfare; that is to say on providing greater opportunities for employment, training and enhancing productive capacity, as well as scientific, cultural and intellectual advancement. We are following closely the steps being taken in this direction. This matter will be the focus of concern for the Supreme Council for Planning.”

EDUCATION

From the outset of the modern Renaissance, Oman has maintained its intense focus on education. It is the ultimate goal for which His Majesty Sultan Qaboos has devoted the core endeavour of his vision for Oman.

The education sector has, consequently, undergone a root and branch overhaul. Every aspect of it has been adapted to serve the purpose of developing the potential of the Omani citizen, the human engine of the development process. Only a capable generation will be able to handle the responsibility of advancing society. To this end, the principles guiding educational policymakers have not been separated from their roots in traditional society in the hastening march to modernity. To these roots have been grafted the contemporary demands for information and adaptive skills, always with the objective of equipping this and future generations with the means to take the national development process forward.

The Ministry of Education has worked to elevate the educational process so as to ensure its compatibility with and responsiveness to the



The principles guiding educational policymakers have not been separated from their roots in traditional society in the hastening march to modernity. To these roots have been grafted the contemporary demands for information and adaptive skills, always with the objective of equipping this and future generations with the means to take the national development process forward.





needs of the community. At the same time, the curriculum has been re-examined to bring it closer into line with the directives of His Majesty that the educational system be synchronised with the needs of society and the requirements of the labour market, as well as meeting its more universal mission.

In the academic year 2014/2015, the Sultanate had 529,469 pupils enrolled in government schools, of which figure 267,547 were male and 261,922 female. New entrants numbered 12,578, distributed among 1,053 government schools throughout the provinces. There were 55,343 teachers and 11,480 administrative staff serving in the state school system, along with 2,379 supervisors.

Education is the goal towards which all efforts ultimately point.



The curricula are designed to draw out the particular talents and abilities of students and so better to guide them towards their most suitable paths and careers.

The Sultanate has logged many successes in the results yielded by its educational policies. One of the principal achievements of these policies has been the adoption of the system of Basic Education (Classes 1-10), followed by Post-Basic Education (Classes 11-12), which together offer both fixed and optional subjects covering a broad range of student interests, while recognizing their respective natural abilities and special talents.

The Ministry of Education has sought to provide an educational and training service of high quality by means of a clear and targeted strategy of nourishing the cognitive development of learning young minds; of promoting values respected by society, while encouraging creative freedom; supporting emotional sensitivity and growth and emphasising the commonalities between people and the value of respecting individual rights. It works to ensure equal access to education and its benefits and to strengthen



the connection between education and the needs of the individual and of society.

It has been an ambition of the Omani school system to develop the concept of global citizenship by reviewing the manner in which citizenship is addressed in the curriculum. A department was established to oversee the introduction into the school curriculum of broad criteria promoting a deep sense of citizenship and citizenship values among students.

The project to develop the school curriculum has opened avenues to areas that would benefit from development, from a broadening of the subject range on offer so as to better serve all aptitudes and abilities, and give students at every level of the educational system more options to fine tune their career paths in line with the development needs of the Sultanate. The introduction

of German and French language teaching reflects the growth of interest in foreign languages at the Grade 11 and 12 levels. The German language was introduced in a pilot scheme at five schools in the 2012/2013 academic year and French in a similar pilot scheme at four schools in 2013/2014.

Inspired by His Majesty's vision and directives, which sought an upgrading of human resource skills to equate with the needs of the times, of national requirements and global developments, the specialised Centre for the Professional Training of Teachers was inaugurated on 2 June 2014. While honing the skills of existing teachers, the Centre offers facilities and techniques for the training of batches of novice teachers and for monitoring their subsequent performance.

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National Centre for Vocational Guidance

The National Centre for Vocational Guidance is an institution that works to upgrade the status of the educational experience. The Centre has a set of goals, which include assisting students and job seekers to discover their vocational preferences and individual abilities; directing students and job seekers toward the course of studies that best suits their abilities; providing a full account of academic specialisations available at higher education institutions and explaining labour market needs.

The Centre continues to bolster its services with the best available international expertise in the field of vocational guidance. It produces leaflets and billboards aimed at raising the awareness of school students throughout the Sultanate.

Given the importance of generating the highest possible standards in education overall, the Ministry of Education undertook the creation of the Omani curriculum standards project and ensured prominence for this project in arriving at a unified approach to the issues of the national curriculum. It examines educational and scientific trends and developments of relevance to the curriculum and to teaching patterns and practices, with an eye to the requirements of development and the labour market and to the overall philosophy of education in the Sultanate. The implementation of change is founded on solid and precise scientific principles that facilitate an ongoing evaluation of the educational system. This will guarantee its quality and elevate the standards of qualification of its graduates.

The Cognitive Development Programme for Students in Science, Mathematics and the Concepts of Environmental Geography is one of the standout educational projects in which the Ministry has engaged since the academic year 2007/2008, building on the guidance of His Majesty the Sultan. It belongs among a range of new departures supportive of the development process initiated by the Ministry across the educational system, always with a view to upgrading the practical and scientific skills of students.

The objective of the Cognitive Development programme is to motivate students to study science, mathematics, and the fundamentals of environmental geography; to encourage them to adopt a rigorous and disciplined approach to research and investigation and thought; to develop their innovative abilities and raise the success figures for student participation in science and mathematics and concepts of environmental geography; and to stimulate the practical and applied aspects of their course studies.

Teachers, meanwhile, are guided to review and upgrade their performance and maintain the skills required to deal with the many levels of ability present in a single class. They are encouraged to keep pace with developments and innovations in science, mathematics and environmental geography.

To establish the pivotal supervisory role of the teacher as an early brick in the educational edifice, the Ministry of Education initiated its development of



The Ministry of Education initiated its development of an advanced supervisory dimension with the implementation of a package of measures with effect from the academic year 2014/2015.



an advanced supervisory dimension with the implementation of a package of measures with effect from the academic year 2014/2015.

Also in the 2014/2015 school year began the implementation of a new supervisory strategy, which follows up performance at each school, at local and national levels. Supervisors analysed the results of students in all subjects and visited the schools where it was evident from the statistical data that support was needed. The statistical data was itself assembled from a variety of sources, including examination results, the reports of supervisors, international competitions and other sources.

New approaches to serving the educational system with facilities for awareness raising and counselling of students have resulted in the drafting of specialists in the social sciences into the school roster. This has been an intensive endeavour, involving many specialists, and today the nation's schools employ 1,188 social workers, of whom 449 are female and 739 male.

In addition, the 2014/2015 academic year saw the process overseen by 61 supervisors allocated to the various provinces with authority over the acting social workers in the Sultanate's schools.

The Education Portal project is the outcome of a comprehensive vision for the future for which the Ministry of Education has identified the long term objectives, as well as plans for the current phase. It is a vision that keeps pace with, and broadly parallels, the government's e-government plan for a digital society and economy-oriented learning.

The Education Portal project reflects the objectives contained in three current and future trend objectives: the digital society, the internet age and the continuous improvement of performance. The idea of the Oman Educational Portal project is an ambitious one, one that has fired the imaginations of many of Oman's educators and that has brought perspective to the strategies that underlie current educational policy.

The project encompasses more than 1,570 useful services, distributed over more than 540 applications hosted on dozens of digital servers and constituting over 15,000 source pages.

Continuing Education

Continuing Education projects have expanded to reach every governorate in the Sultanate, while engaged in ongoing growth themselves. New programmes have been introduced, new school subjects taught. The efforts of the Ministry of Education are now being rewarded in the form of a spurt of achievement by comparison with past outcomes, driving literacy forward in quantum leaps in terms of statistics and quality of result. Projects and programmes in the field of literacy are now firmly embedded in the Eighth Five-Year Plan in the form of the Educated Village project. The realistic objective outlined in the Plan is to inaugurate three Educated Villages per year in the Sultanate.



The Education Portal project encompasses more than 1,570 useful services, distributed over more than 540 applications hosted on dozens of digital servers.





Community cooperation helps eradicate illiteracy.

Also in an expanding phase is the Cooperative Schools project, advancing at the rate of approximately four schools per academic year. Meanwhile the literacy branch network is growing, with intensification of efforts in areas with high illiteracy statistics by reference to the official statistics from the Census 2010 with a view to bringing the numbers down. The literacy project is benefiting from the support in this respect of the Omani Women's Associations.

This project was born of a conviction in the importance of cooperation between the Sultanate's governmental, non-governmental and private institutions, acting in a concerted effort to eradicate illiteracy; and in the importance of the role played by the Ministry of Social Development and its various associated social institutions, in particular the Omani Women's Associations. These latter have a unique ability to communicate with various segments of the community and to access the target illiterate segment.

A plan to raise awareness through the media of available literacy programmes was separated into three phases, to be implemented in the academic years 2013/2014, 2014/2015 and 2015/2016, and has now seen the first phase of the campaign implemented. Launched nationwide on 5-9 January 2014, it encompassed many diverse events and activities, all geared towards raising awareness of the dangers of illiteracy and encouraging as many candidates as possible to aspire to literacy.

A plan to raise awareness through the media of available literacy programmes was separated into three phases, to be implemented in the academic years 2013/2014, 2014/2015 and 2015/2016.

Private Schools

The Ministry of Education supervises technical and administrative aspects of the private schools. The Ministry prepares projects and plans for the development of these schools. A follow-up programme is in place to ensure that private schools adhere to the guidelines laid down by the Ministry.

According to the statistics for the 2014/2015 academic year, the Sultanate had 480 private schools, of which 42 were international.

The Ministry of Education has espoused a special project that assesses the performance of private schools. The project seeks to maintain an ideal standard within all components of a private school education (administration, teaching staff, students and the technical assistance staff).

Private schools in the Sultanate fall into the following categories: kindergartens (nurseries), Qur'anic schools, bilingual schools, monolingual schools and international schools of the various levels.

The Ministry has established a website to serve the purpose of administrative oversight. It has also commissioned a study on how to instil a culture of quality at private schools, and established activities around 'days of cultural exchange' designed to stimulate the Sultanate's policy of peaceful coexistence, and mutual and constructive dialogue between different cultures. It has worked on completing the strategic planning

According to the statistics for the 2014/2015 academic year, the Sultanate had 480 private schools, of which 42 were international.

Private schools are an important component of the educational system in the Sultanate.



The Ministry of Education's objective is to achieve an integrated strategy for Oman's Scouts and Guides in the volunteer support area, where they would work in harmony with the principles and generally accepted standards of the movement.

Programmes and activities are specially targeted for scouts and guides.

project, and completing the programme to screen for science and maths subjects in the educational stages, along with English as a second language; ultimately to draft a curriculum framework for Grades 1-6.

Scouts and Guides

The continuing support of the Sultanate's Chief Scout, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, has enabled the Scouts and Guides Directorate to pursue an active programme of activities that targets scouts and guides of all ages and stages and strengthen its position at local, regional and international levels.

In August 2015 Oman's scout delegation participated in the 23rd World Scout Jamboree which was held in Yamaguchi City, Japan, and organised an exhibition to showcase the country's heritage and culture.

The Ministry of Education aspires to draw the Boy Scout and Girl Guide movements into working within civil society organisations and government agency programmes; to develop specialised cadres of Boy Scouts and Girl Guides in managing crisis and handling disasters related to climate change, coordinating their actions with those of the relevant State authorities. The objective is to achieve an integrated strategy for Oman's Scouts and Guides in the volunteer support area, where they would work in harmony with the principles and generally accepted standards of the movement.





HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education, and the provision of centres of scientific and cultural research and study, represents the number one criterion in measuring the progress and prosperity of countries and communities, and is a major factor in the pre-drafting of strategies for building human capital. Viewed from this point of view, higher education is an essential constituent of Oman's modern Renaissance, and over a succession of five-year plans, it has evolved and grown in terms of the number of functioning institutions, the number of enrolled students, the diversity of academic programmes in the various disciplines, and the diversity of educational qualifications awarded, all contributing to meeting the need for qualified personnel in advancing development plans.

There were 57 State and private institutions of higher education operating in the Sultanate in the academic year 2013/2014, distributed throughout the governorates and covering the classifications of university, university college and specialised institute.

The same academic year saw 35,159 successful candidates of the public education diploma or equivalent. There were 26,151 new students enrolled in higher education courses, or 74.6% of the total success figure, according to the Annual Statistical Report on common entrance requirements for the academic year 2014/2015.

Academic programmes and courses are available in a range of disciplines at institutions of higher education.



Higher education is an essential constituent of Oman's modern renaissance, and over a succession of five-year plans, it has evolved and grown in terms of the number of functioning institutions, the number of enrolled students, the diversity of academic programmes in the various disciplines.



Students entering third level education were distributed among the State and private institutions of higher education, training centres and professional institutes and exchange missions (internal and external). Of the new admissions, 63% were enrolled in public institutions, and 57% of all new enrolments in higher education were female.

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said has championed the rising trend of school-leavers entering third level education, a trend incentivised by the provision of 1,500 foreign and 7,000 local scholarships. This generous stimulus levels the playing field and brings opportunity for General Education Diploma graduates who might otherwise be deprived of further education to proceed to college or university.

His Majesty has also instructed the allocation of 1,000 external scholarships for Master and Doctorate level degrees in scientific disciplines needed by the Omani labour market. These specialisations have been pre-identified by the market and the scholarship allocations have been staggered over a five-year period at the rate of 200 a year in a range of disciplines.



By a decision of the Board of Education taken on 25/5/2015 in regard to the Rustaq College of Applied Science, it was transferred to the College of Education dealing with the training and qualification of teachers.

Colleges of Applied Science

The Ministry of Higher Education has responded enthusiastically to the recommendation of His Majesty, delivered in his 12/11/2012 speech to the annual convening of the Council of Oman, in which he stipulated the importance of expanding the opportunities made available to young scholars to enable them to realise their full potential; and of encouraging their participation in international scientific forums. The Ministry supports the process in many ways. The Directorate oversees five Colleges of Applied Sciences distributed over various provinces (Sohar, Nizwa, Sur, Ibri, Salalah). Meanwhile, by a decision of the Board of Education taken on 25/5/2015 in



regard to the Rustaq College of Applied Science, it was transferred to the College of Education dealing with the training and qualification of teachers.

The academic year 2013/2014 had 8,001 students studying in academic programmes (IT, business administration, communication studies, design, engineering, and applied biotechnology).

The Colleges of Applied Science benefit from support over a range of activities and programmes offered by them. They fuel a culture of self-confidence among students, and a positive sense of social inclusion and engagement with the work environment, as befits the enhancement of skills and experience they encounter, and the recognition of their gifts and talents.

The Centre for Scientific Research affiliated to the Directorate General of the Colleges of Applied Sciences helps develop strategic plans for scientific research at the Directorate, and also drafts annual plans for research projects at the Colleges. It also issues twice yearly the Omani Journal of Applied Sciences, a publication of the Colleges of Applied Science.

It is a national priority to promote higher education as an option for school-leavers, to maximise the intake at third level colleges throughout the Sultanate.



Special Needs education is a growing trend, with major improvements in both quality and quantity.

Private Higher Education

The private higher education sector in the Sultanate has seen steady growth, with private institutions evolving in both quality and quantity. The Sultanate has 27 such institutions at this date, of which seven are universities: Dhofar University, University of Nizwa, Sohar University, the German University of Technology in Oman (GUtech), Al Buraymi University College, the Arab Open University, Al Sharqiyah University), along with twenty colleges.

The new International College of Engineering and Management received its first batch of students in September 2014. Overall private institutions of higher education are distributed throughout the governorates of the Sultanate and represent some 47% of the total number of higher education institutions in the country.

The number of students studying in the private sector stood at 60,294 in the 2013/2014 academic year, representing 49.6% of the country's total third level student body. These institutions offer courses leading to diploma and bachelor degree level qualifications. Some also offer Master level qualifications.



A range of study courses is on offer at private institutions of higher education, along with some specialist programmes. Oman Medical College, for example, offers full degree courses in Medicine, Pharmacy and Health Sciences; as does the College of Dentistry in Dentistry. The Caledonian College offers degrees in Engineering, and the College of the Middle East specialises in IT.

Higher Education Admission Centre

There is no doubt that the technology of information and communication is crucially important to the development of societies. The changeover from traditional to electronic systems marked a major turning point for government services in the Sultanate. It had a significant impact on the process of registration for and admission to colleges of higher education, where a fairer and more transparent system earned the sector deserved credibility of an order sought by any society aspiring to raise the skills calibre of its population and workforce. Specialist knowledge and an acquaintance with science are needed in all sectors of society if they are to

advance in sophistication.

This is the context in which was created the Higher Education Admission Centre (HEAC), which serves the purposes of coordinating and executing admission procedures for school leavers who have completed their General Education Diploma and are seeking admission to third level institutions both within the Sultanate and abroad through registration with the electronic admissions system. This system ensures equal opportunity for all applications, and serves the community by facilitating the process of accessing higher education. Applications to third level institutions are managed efficiently, using modern technology to closely match the preferences and points scores of student applicants with the entry requirements of respective institutions and the admission quotas available for each course.

In the nine years since its establishment, the HEAC has grown exponentially and today uses multiple electronic systems. The electronic admissions system for the first undergraduate stage and the higher education statistical system are the two principal systems managed by the Centre. Other computerised



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The intellectual and cognitive development of the human mind and of society is an objective derived from the vision of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, for whom the university is a symbolic repository of knowledge and expertise open to representatives of every segment of society.

registration and admission systems are overseen by the Centre in coordination with the Directorate General of Scholarships, these being: the system of acceptance into undergraduate studies, the internal financial subsidies system, the external financial subsidies system, the internal and external system of open scholarships and grants available from institutions of higher education or from certain private sector institutions.

Graduate Survey Department

In order to monitor the graduate output of the higher education system and keep abreast of the extent to which this output has been equipped to meet the requirements of the labour market in terms of the disciplines, skills and competencies possessed by graduates, the Graduate Survey Department was established to survey the status of this segment of the community. It constitutes one of the most important tools for measuring the match between graduate skills and labour market needs. Moreover, it serves as a

means to monitor, through the data and indicators collected by it, the strengths and weaknesses of the higher education system, and as such as a factor contributing to its development. It is used by decision-makers, policy-makers and career guidance institutions, as well as by students and their custodians.

Following on from the task undertaken in previous experimental surveys of higher education graduates, the Department implemented a survey in 2015 which was the first national survey of its kind to include graduates of both public and private higher education institutions, as well as graduates of foreign exchange and higher studies programmes. It has, meanwhile established a schedule for implementation of a survey of higher education graduates which was begun in September 2014.

Early indications gleaned from the results of the survey in May 2015, in which 12,551 graduates participated, a response rate of 51%, suggest that 53.4% of graduates from batch 2009/2010 and batch 2012/2013 are working.





Sultan Qaboos university

The intellectual and cognitive development of the human mind and of society in Oman was and continues to be a strategic objective of Sultan Qaboos University, since its inauguration in 1986. It is an objective derived from the vision of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, for whom the university is a symbolic repository of knowledge and expertise open to representatives of every segment of society; and this bastion of educational excellence has dedicated itself unreservedly to the manifestation of that vision.

In almost three decades, the university has undergone remarkable qualitative advances. It has implemented programmes and activities of outstanding and intelligent benefit to the country's development, turning out graduates of the highest calibre.

Sultan Qaboos University sets highest store by the reputation of its

Highly qualified and motivated graduates of Sultan Qaboos University are a powerful asset to the Sultanate's development project.



Sultan Qaboos University .. a fountain of knowledge where all who thirst may gather and learn.



Sultan Qaboos University funds 142 research grants in various disciplines, principally those related to health, materials science, engineering and agriculture.



teaching staff, along with its contribution to scientific research, community service and international cooperation. The University offers three degrees at bachelor's, master's and doctoral levels, through its nine colleges: the College of Arts and Social Sciences, the College of Economics and Political Science, the College of Education, the College of Agricultural and Marine Sciences, the College of Medicine and Health Sciences, the College of Nursing, College of Law, and the College of Engineering and College of Science.

In the academic year 2014/2015, the university had an enrolment of 15,337 undergraduate students, of whom 15,235 were Omani, or 99%. There were 102 foreign students, or 1%. The university had 60 master's programmes on offer for the academic year 2015/2016, and 32 doctoral programmes.

The university also provides a number of full and partial scholarships on an annual basis for students wishing to enrol in master's and doctoral programmes, offering 85 scholarships for master's degrees and 20 for PhD. At undergraduate level, student applicants, on receiving the required points level in the General Education Diploma, may apply through the HEAC.

Scientific research is the foundation on which Sultan Qaboos University will build the edifice of its future success. Offering a solid basis and generous support for scientific research, thanks to the wisdom and insight of His

Majesty the Sultan, the university has achieved ground breaking success in research studies of a strategic nature and which address many of the issues facing Oman today in the fields of environment, energy, health sciences, humanities and social sciences, communications, industry and resources.

From a budget of approximately one million OR, the university funds 142 research grants in various disciplines, principally those related to health, materials science, engineering and agriculture.

Faculty members and medical, technical, administrative personnel, as well as graduate students of the university, participate directly in many overseas events, including conferences and seminars, or indirectly by way of scientific papers submitted.

The university organises and hosts global conferences to enrich its scientific and investigative endeavours, and participates in these events in the form of specialist papers submitted that enhance the reputation of the university in the academic and research community internationally. In the 2014/2015 academic year alone, the university organised 14 conferences and scientific seminars.

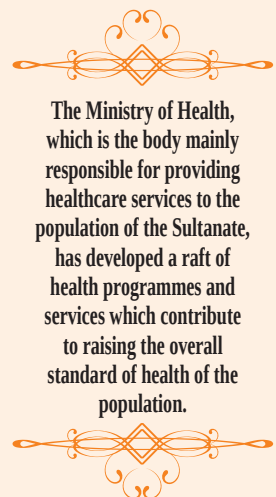
SQU has established strong ties with leading global academic institutions and research centres around the world. Cooperation with these international bodies reflects SQU's keenness to guarantee superior level quality in its programmes and proficiency among its graduates. It also indicates the university's active contribution to friendship among nations. SQU in this way reaffirms its strong presence in the academic world and maintains a deserved position among the world's top 500 universities and academic establishments, as per the QS rating.

HEALTH

Under the government of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said the Sultanate has, over the past 45 years, logged some remarkable achievements in the health sector, the most outstanding of which has been the provision of basic healthcare to every Omani citizen and resident of the country. This superb marker of the Sultanate's commitment to the quality of life of its people has led to its being ranked among the countries of the developed world insofar as concerns its healthcare system.

The Ministry of Health, which is the body mainly responsible for providing healthcare services to the population of the Sultanate, has developed a raft of health programmes and services which contribute to raising the overall standard of health of the population.

This great milestone would not have been attained without continuous and dedicated planning, rolled out in the sequence of Five-Year Plans implemented by the Sultanate since 1976. These plans gave birth to comprehensive programmes that raised overall health standards within the population.



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The year 2015, the last year of the 8th Five-Year Health Development Plan (2011-2015), saw the continued implementation of the new planning format adopted by the Ministry during the 7th Five-Year Plan, a strategic concept which has helped provide both clear vision and appropriate orientation in determining and addressing priority problems and needs.

That plan has taken account of Gulf, regional and international trends and the obligations of the Sultanate in this respect, as well as the United Nations Millennium Declaration (2000), ratified by the Sultanate, which aims to achieve eight development goals over the 25-year period from 1990-2015. Together these constitute the “Millennium Development Goals”, three of which are directly linked to health development, while the others contribute to improving the health status of the community indirectly, in the form, for instance, of environmental and educational goals.

The Ministry of Health attaches great importance to the health workforce as the backbone of the healthcare provision system. It has trained and upgraded the skills of the Omani healthcare workforce with a view to them becoming the future pillars of the system. The Ministry relies on statistical information and data in drafting its five-year plans and working out strategic objectives, for which it has garnered the respect and admiration of the international community for the Sultanate’s approach to social progress.

Intensive input continues apace on the long-term plan, namely the outlook for the health system up to 2050. This plan represents merely a transitional phase to support the health system in coping with medical and technical developments worldwide. It is expected that a harvest of benefit will accrue to all aspects of health and healthcare in the not too distant future.



The Ministry of Health has trained and upgraded the skills of the Omani healthcare workforce with a view to them becoming the future pillars of the system.



The healthcare system consists of three integrated components: primary healthcare, secondary healthcare and tertiary healthcare. Primary healthcare is provided at health centres and local hospitals in all governorates and *wilayats* of the Sultanate. Secondary care is provided by referral hospitals in the Sultanate's main *wilayats*. These hospitals offer more skilled and specialised levels of healthcare. Tertiary care encompasses high-level technical healthcare. This is provided in the major hospitals in the governorate of Muscat, namely the Royal Hospital, Khoula Hospital and Al Nahda Hospital. All of these hospitals provide comprehensive medical treatment and act as referral hospitals to all parts of the Sultanate. Al Masarra Hospital in the Governorate of Muscat provides tertiary-level care, and specialises in the treatment of psychiatric and neurological diseases.

The Sultanate has a total of 67 hospitals, 49 of which are owned by the Ministry of Health. These hospitals provide 6,561 beds, which is a ratio of

The Sultanate gives great attention to the quality and efficiency of its healthcare services.





Modern medical facilities are needed to keep pace with rising expectations and global advances in health care.



Medical laboratories are a crucial component of the system and are regularly upgraded.



The private health sector is an additional source of health services in the Sultanate and it is experiencing steady growth. By the end of 2014, the Sultanate's private health institutions included 13 hospitals.



1.64 beds for every 1,000 members of the population. Of these beds, 4,821 belong to Health Ministry hospitals, constituting 78.1% of the total of all hospitals in the Sultanate.

This is in addition to the health services rendered to the employees and relatives by the Diwan of Royal Court, the Ministry of Defence, the Royal Oman Police, Petroleum Development Oman and Sultan Qaboos University. The University Hospital (SQUH) offers all three levels of healthcare (primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare) to all citizens.

Visits to outpatient clinics in 2014 stood at 15 million. The increase in the number of visits to clinics and patient admissions followed an increase in other services, such as medical laboratory, x-ray and dentistry services.

The number of patients treated at hospital internal departments stood at approximately 319,000 inpatients in 2013. More than 95,000 surgical operations were conducted in 2014.

The logic behind the Health Ministry's emphasis on primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare stems from a conviction that progress in these areas will bring down the rates of communicable diseases, raise the average life expectancy and allow for more focus on problems arising from non-communicable diseases, which typically require continuous and advanced healthcare.

As for primary healthcare, the Ministry of Health, in its current Five-

Year Plan, has focused on ensuring support for the development of health services that provide highly effective and low-cost primary healthcare. This includes an expansion in the number of establishments providing primary healthcare to people throughout the Sultanate, as well as regular support and upgrading of those institutions so that they can provide a service of high quality. These efforts have had a tangible and remarkable outcome - a significant improvement in health status of the Omani population.

By the end of 2014 there were 233 health centres, polyclinics and local hospitals, of which 230 were run by the Health Ministry. These include 72 health centres with beds, 108 health centres without beds, 21 polyclinics and 29 local hospitals.

As many as 586 assistant medical and paramedical graduates graduated from Ministry of Health institutes in 2013, bringing to 12,192 the overall number of such graduates over the past years. This is in addition to 2,218 medical and paramedical graduates who graduated from higher education institutions in 2012. Omanisation in the health sector received a strong boost with the successive graduation of Omani doctors from Sultan Qaboos University and private higher education institutions, together with the growing numbers of technicians from the Ministry's institutes.

The private health sector is an additional source of health services in the Sultanate and it is experiencing steady growth. By the end of 2014, the Sultanate's private health institutions included 13 hospitals, 491 general clinics, 288 specialised clinics, a polyclinic, 225 dental clinics, 64 clinics specialised in Chinese and Indian traditional medicine, 18 laboratory centres, 7 MRI centres and 550 pharmacies.

CIVIL SERVICE

To secure the advances achieved across the many aspects of life in Oman under the modern Renaissance, it was necessary to overhaul the administration of the state apparatus. A disciplined and sophisticated administrative structure would have to be built if the momentum of progress was not to be undermined.

To this end, the Ministry of Civil Service has worked within the terms of reference assigned to it to create a smooth and effective administrative link force between the various units of civil government. Through staff training and skills development it has striven to bring about a paradigm shift in the concept of administrative work within the service. The new civil servant would be armed with science and knowledge, and an ability to participate in the advancement of society on the basis that development is human-centered. This is the vision that His Majesty the Sultan has espoused and promoted from the outset.

The year 2015 is the last in the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan drafted and organised by the Ministry of Civil Service with the purpose of stimulating



The Ministry of Civil Service has worked within the terms of reference assigned to it to create a smooth and effective administrative link between the various units of civil government.





Equal opportunity is a core principle, to ensure that all who compete for public vacancies are selected on a basis of justice, equality and possession of the advertised qualifications.



The framework for a standardised system of grades and salaries for Omani Civil Service employees, constituting the greatest incentive for civil service employees to exert more effort and bring more enthusiasm to their work.



and improving performance and enhancing the services provided. The Ministry set itself up to become a crucible of expertise and a reference source for government units in the provision of high quality civil and administrative services.

The civil service sector encompasses 36 government units, staffed at the end of May 2015 by more than 180,000 employees. Appointees through the central recruitment system for the civil service sector stood at 51,517 for the last four years.

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said issued directives on 11 November 2013 instructing a harmonisation of civil service pay and grade schedules throughout the entire service, to be implemented with effect from 1/1/2014. In addition, retirement benefits were to be harmonised in accordance with the retirement system in place for staff of the Diwan of the Royal Court. The Civil Service Law and its various enactments would be re-examined and recomposed into a new unified Civil Service Law. This was followed by the promulgation of Royal Decree No. 78/2013, which created the framework for a standardised system of grades and salaries for Omani civil service employees, constituting the greatest incentive for civil service employees to exert more effort and bring more enthusiasm to their work. This overhaul was necessary to bring pay equality and balance to the public sector in the Sultanate and stabilise the movement of human resources so

as to ensure greater job security for employees. Ultimately this is reflected in the quality of their performance and of the services provided by their respective units.

Insofar as recruitment is concerned the Ministry of Civil Service has worked assiduously to create a recruitment infrastructure that ensures that all government units achieve their staffing objectives, and that every citizen has an equal, fair and open opportunity in competing for public postings. They should meet the legally prescribed requirements regarding merit; while workforce needs should be bridged by a system that links appointments with real vacancies and available financial resources.

The development and modernisation of the central recruitment system was given much attention, the principal objectives being to create procedures that offered equal opportunity in employment and ensured the exercise of best practice in the application of the central recruitment system to standard functions. The system achieved is both convenient for the public, while it saves time, effort and material and human resources in the announcement of jobs and processing of applications. It also speeds up the filling of vacancies and facilitates transparency and fairness in the selection process.

In the determination to sustain the development and management of its human resource workforce, the most recent concepts in the field have been engaged, and international standards applied. Also prominent has been the solid coordination and cooperation between government agencies and the private sector. The text of the Civil Service Law states that “training and qualification are an occupational obligation” and public service units are encouraged to provide opportunities for the training of all staff of the various grades and functional levels in keeping with the demands of their posting, and with the training plans and programmes provided.

Training and qualification programmes are geared mostly to group mode, taking place either on-site or off-site at the premises of training institutes. Annual statistics and indicators show a steady rise in the number of Omani employees who have benefited from training opportunities both within the Sultanate and abroad. By mid-2015 this figure stood at 87,787 in total.

Cooperation between the public and private sectors is extensive. In the pursuit of effective administrative development within the State administration, several private sector institutions have funded events and training programmes both inside and outside the Sultanate. A diverse range of areas is covered, such as managing a government sector institution’s reputation, courses in excellence for the auditorial service, recent trends in government accounting and audit, developing work methods and procedures, measuring the return on investment in training, leadership and institutional innovation, and other administrative areas of study.



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Institute of Public Administration

The Institute of Public Administration (IPA) constitutes the cornerstone of administrative development in the Sultanate. Since its foundation in 1977, the IPA has offered a broad range of training services, as well as consultancy and research support to government civil and military units and private sector establishments. It designs and arranges training programmes that are tailored to the work requirements of an organisation, and provides studies, publications and guides, as well as consultation that supports human and administrative development and the rational use of manpower in client units or institutions.

The IPA periodical entitled *Al Idari*, which has been published regularly since 1979, is a management information tool that serves as an information bridge between government and private institutions, as well as for individuals who avail of the information resources maintained at the Institute's library.

In 2014, the IPA conducted 264 training programmes, benefiting 4,757 male and female participants; of which 210 special programmes targeted 3,901 male and female employees and 54 general programmes serving 856 male and female employees.

The Institute organised several events during 2014, the most prominent of which was a forum on the confluence of modern human resources and training aids, which was held in Salalah from 25-27 August 2014 and was attended by 136 participants from various units of the state administration. Included in the 2015 training plan was the implementation of 349 general and special courses covering the respective requirements for professional training at various administrative levels throughout the administrative apparatus of State.

MANPOWER

The government of the Sultanate has made every effort to provide the labour market with experienced human resources capable of operating as a driving force in the establishment of a modern economy with an advanced level of development. The directives of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said contributed dramatically to expanding the provision of job opportunities to local jobseekers, along with opportunities in education and training for young people to enable them to develop their knowledge and skills with a focus on the disciplines needed by the labour market. Ultimately this has resulted in a steady rise in Omanisation throughout the economy, in a manner that is consistent with the output of educational and training academies.

As a result, private sector employment has benefited from a major expansion in job opportunities made available to nationals. The jobs range across all economic activities and sectors, and the private sector now



Included in the IPA's 2015 training plan was the implementation of 349 general and special courses covering the respective requirements for professional training at various administrative levels throughout the administrative apparatus of the State.





employs 214,130 nationals, according to figures from the end of March 2015. As of the beginning of 2015, there were 20,438 Omani nationals, male and female, seeking employment.

The new State-approved employment policies are designed to bring about a qualitative change with a move away from the public sector as the principal provider of employment towards an increased role by the private sector, which should ultimately become the main workforce employer.

An upward adjustment of the social security system and an increase in the minimum pension payable to workers in the private sector, along with a reassessment of pension levels so as to be calculated off the total monthly salary as opposed to the basic monthly salary, as was previously the case, has assisted this transition.

Small-Medium Enterprises – the Al Rafd Fund

To encourage young Omanis to set up private projects, a message conveyed in such public awareness events as the seminar for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) held at Seih Al Shamikhath on 21-23 January 2013, the Al Rafd Fund was established by means of Royal Decree No. 6/2013 with a starting capital of RO70 million. An annual top-up of RO7 million will keep the fund liquid and available as an all-embracing resource for enterprising young people.

In giving special attention to human development, the policies of the Sultanate promote the acquisition of learning and expertise.



Private sector employment has benefited from a major expansion in job opportunities made available to nationals. The jobs range across all economic activities and sectors.



Loans approved by the Al Rafd Fund during 2014 amounted to more than RO34.6 million. Total actual disbursements came to just over RO20 million, benefiting 1,002 entrepreneurs who took advantage of its four funding programmes.

The resource programme approved 18 loans, the founding programme 174, the leadership programme 742, and the consolidation programme 64.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Manpower continues to support entrepreneurship, providing many facilities for owners of SMEs. In this regard the Ministry proceeded to include an entrepreneurship course in the programmes it sponsors. Technical colleges have included entrepreneurship modules in their curricula since the 2003/2004 academic year for students taking Business Studies. It became compulsory in 2014/2015 for all disciplines offered by the technical colleges. In the vocational training centres and qualification institutes for fishermen an introductory course to the business world was added in 2007/2008, this module being one of the modules approved by the ILO.

Trade Unions

Ministerial Decree No. 59/2010 on the formation, registration and operation of trade and labour unions, and of the General Union of Workers of the Sultanate of Oman, translates as a true reflection of the Sultanate's commitment to the trade union endeavour. The ministerial decree also outlined matters relating to the structural organisation of trade unions and the methodology of registration and terms of reference of their operation and goals; along with the fundamental content of their articles of association; the membership numbers of trade union governing bodies; the procedures for filing documents; the rules of dissolution of trade and labour unions; and the issue of discharging members. As of March 2015, there were 220 trade unions registered in the Sultanate.

Modern technology

In the transition to e-government, the Ministry of Manpower in 2015 launched a succession of electronic services in 2015, which will facilitate the process of providing services to its beneficiaries.

The Ministry of Manpower initiated its implementation of the wage protection scheme in March 2015, working in cooperation with the Central Bank to follow up private sector enterprises and ensure their compliance in turning over wage payments to employees' own accounts within the timeframe and in the extent agreed under the terms of the Labour Code. The Ministry also launched an application for Smart phones which makes



**The Ministry of
Manpower continues to
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available a broad range of services to employers as well as to job seekers and residents. Also launched was the electronic application system for qualified job seekers (graduates of post-General Education Diploma certificates and above), which allows them to find and apply for job opportunities available in private sector enterprises registered with the Ministry of Manpower. It also gives employers access to job seeking candidates and to post the outcome of applications.

TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Technical education is a critical component of the system of higher education in the Sultanate, and occupies a place of rising prominence as a result of increasing the number of admissions absorbed from the school leaving body of General Education Diploma holders. In addition, the labour market is increasingly absorbing the output of the technical and vocational education sector in line with its greater need for personnel with technical and specialised skills.

Technical education in the Sultanate has advanced in sophistication, keeping pace with the evolution of the labour market and the national economy. The Sultanate's development strategy has afforded special attention to the development of human resources as key to the development of a cadre possessing scientific and technical competencies and professional skills.

The technical education sector and its institutions have expanded in capacity and diversity, offering specialised courses in many fields and gradations of technical qualification, in keeping with the constantly changing needs of the labour market and workforce.

In the 2014/2015 academic year, 10,262 school-leaving holders of the General Education Diploma were accepted into the country's technical colleges through the harmonised central admissions system, making up a ratio of 32.5% of all third level acceptances into State-run institutions.

Efforts continue to upgrade vocational education through development and diversification, and the gradation of professional qualifications offered. As well as broader course offerings, this sector is marked for expansion, with government training institutes being urged to increase capacity and adapt the professional preparedness of vocational school graduates for a competent and successful future in the private sector workforce.

There were 3,439 trainees enrolled at the beginning of 2014/2015 in courses on offer at various vocational training centres, in Seeb, Saham, Sur, Ibri, Shinas and Buraymi, as well as at the fishing institutes in Khabourah and Salalah.



The Sultanate's development strategy has afforded special attention to the development of human resources as key to the development of a cadre possessing scientific and technical competencies and professional skills.



Technical education marches in time with the evolution of the labour market and the national economy.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Social cohesion and synergy are valued aspects of life in Oman, being products of the Omani's natural propensity for collaboration and solidarity within a community.

From this reality proceeds an emphasis on the social dimension in all development plans, one that occupies centre place if their success is to be assured. The Omani citizen, as individual and member of a community, is the bedrock of all of these plans, which share the common aim of providing a decent life for every Omani family, through the deployment of a social welfare umbrella that benefits all who need its safe cover.

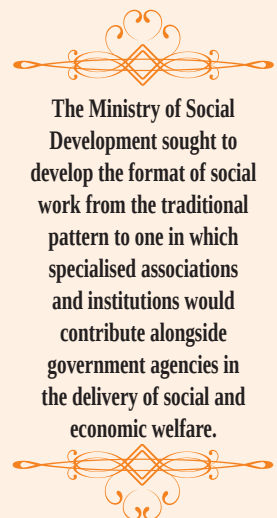
It follows that the Ministry of Social Development should put social welfare at the heart of its aspiration to raise the level of initiative and ambition among citizens and offer the beneficiaries of social welfare the skills to enable them to rely on themselves and provide a secure foundation economically for their families.

The Ministry has also sought to develop the format of social work from the traditional pattern to one in which specialised associations and institutions would contribute alongside government agencies in the delivery of social and economic welfare.

The Ministry is also working to enhance activities and schemes aimed at different segments of society and to improve the quality of its services and social programmes. These programmes include a range of services suited to different categories of need for care and assistance. The objective is to offer beneficiaries the components of a decent life. At the end of 2014, the Ministry was subsidising 84,919 recipients of social security benefit in one form or another at a cost to the State of RO131,963,008 for the year to December. This figure included the two Eid bonuses and that for the month of Ramadan. Moreover, social security pensions were paid to 180,848 recipients, or 7.9% of the national population.

Through cooperation and coordination between the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of Higher Education, 2,973 students from social welfare benefit families were enabled to proceed to higher education in the academic year 2014/2015 at the expense of the state. The grant scheme covered various universities and government and private colleges both inside and outside the Sultanate. In addition, 396 pilgrimage grants to complete the *haj* were allocated to social welfare recipients; 108 houses were maintained or refurbished, representing the homes of social welfare beneficiaries, the elderly or persons with disability, at a financial cost of RO649,326.

Some governorates suffered severe damage due to exceptional weather in the form of heavy rains and storms. Where the events were classified as disasters, causing damage of a greater or lesser extent to individual or collective property, urgent relief and assistance was provided on assessment



of the situation and of the type and extent of relief required. Individual and collective disasters in 2014 generated 1,059 calls for assistance at a cost of 368, 651 OR in cash terms, in addition to various assistance-in-kind.

The Ministry of Social Development aspires, through the contributions it makes to self-help projects, to encourage cooperation and interdependence within communities. It promotes a culture of self-reliance and the embedding of values of social solidarity and encourages communities to take the initiative in contributing to and participating in local community development by their own effort, from its belief that encouraging such community initiatives brings benefit and rewards to society overall.

The Ministry offers a range of welfare programmes and social services for persons with disability, as well as the elderly, to help them become self-reliant insofar as is possible in the management of their daily lives. The appropriate services for these recipients are selected by way of vocational assessment and rehabilitation centres, which handle the care and rehabilitation of persons with mental disability who are eligible for vocational rehabilitation.

During 2014, the Ministry introduced several measures aimed at empowering women in various areas, including a workshop on the social empowerment of women with disabilities, the women in Omani legislation scheme, and a workshop on women and their role in preserving Omani identity. In addition, it completed the programme to prepare training instructors in women's empowerment socially, legally and politically.

From a belief in the need to provide more services for victims of disability, Royal Decree 18/2014, issued on 24/3/2014, outlined the creation of a general directorate within the Ministry of Social Development



The legal framework for child protection was delivered on 19/05/2014 in the form of the Child Law, which has 79 articles aggregated into 11 chapters.



to be entitled the Directorate General for the Affairs of Persons with Disability, and which would lead national plans and programmes for persons with disabilities and follow up their implementation, including care and rehabilitation programmes and programmes to integrate persons challenged by disability into society, supported by the relevant authorities.

Royal Decree No. 22/2014 recognised the need for children to enjoy the full benefits of childhood, and the need to protect their rights in law. The legal framework for this protection was delivered on 19/05/2014 in the form of the Child Law, which has 79 articles aggregated into 11 chapters.

This socially progressive work by the Sultanate, as represented in this respect by the Ministry of Social Development, has won regional acknowledgement, in the form of the Gulf Cooperation Council's Humanitarian Award (3rd Round). The volunteerism sponsored by the Sultan Qaboos Award for Voluntary Work was the beneficiary of the award,

Social programmes and activities are geared to the needs of different segments of society.



The achievements of Omani women are a source of pride for all Omanis.



With the blessing of His Majesty, Women's Day has become an annual fixture, celebrated on 17 October.



which was presented at a ceremony held in Bahrain on 25/6/2014. The Ministry sponsored a festival celebrating the work carried out by volunteers as part of International Volunteer Day, which falls on 5 December of every year. It also published a number of booklets and leaflets on the prize, the most important of which are the Volunteer Work Charter, a reference guide on the award and a guide to volunteer work.

For its part in the e-government project, the Ministry of Social Development has made strides in the use of technology for the delivery of services electronically. Digitalisation simplifies and speeds up procedures, making life easier for all involved while at the same time raising the quality of services that can be delivered electronically to citizens and residents and institutions.

The advances achieved by Omani women continue to be a source of pride for all Omanis. With the blessing of His Majesty, Women's Day has become an annual fixture, celebrated on 17 October. The 2014 celebrations were held in Sur, where the festivities included an event honouring Oman's women's associations, as winners of a contest evaluating their work. A presentation, "The role of the Omani Women's Associations in developing the capacities of young people" was well received, as was a sample presentation of social studies conducted on feminist themes.

SPORT

The development of the Sultanate's sports infrastructure has been accompanied by an expansion in the public's engagement with fans and sports, along with individual and collective achievements logged in competitive sports both domestically and internationally.

The Ministry of Sports Affairs (MoSA) in September 2014 announced the setting up of the annual *Youth Achievement Awards (Injazatana'a)* with a generous budget of RO174,000 to motivate Omani achievers in sports and youth activities. The budget for the awards was distributed in two major categories - sports (RO90,000) and youth activities (RO84,000). A total of 179 applications, including 112 in sports, were received between December 24, 2014 and March 15, 2015.

Besides the Youth Achievement Awards, the Sports Ministry also had *six national level programmes for the youth and clubs* of the country. They were 'Shajaa Fareeqak' (Encourage your teams), Summer of Sports, 'Shababi'(clubs' youth programme), Clubs' youth camps, Youth Creations Award, and 'Mubaderoon'(award of best initiatives).

The *Youth Innovations competition* was founded to stimulate interest in organised and enterprising youth work. It aims to encourage young people to develop their abilities, and to facilitate interaction between youth club members through cultural, social, artistic and sports activities, and link them to community issues.

A total of 22 clubs submitted their entries to the Sports Ministry for *His Majesty's Cup for Youth*, a symbol of club supremacy in the Sultanate that underlines focus on overall development of sports activities. The winner's trophy comprises a cash prize of RO30,000 which was won by Saham Club, second placed Dhofar collected RO28,000, and Seeb Club took the bronze trophy and RO26,000.

A number of milestone projects were completed to bolster the existing sports infrastructure in the country. One of the major projects completed was the sports complex in Musandam. Also the sports ministry has begun work for the construction of a sports complex in Rustaq and is also enhancing the seating capacity of the Al Saada Sports Complex in Salalah.

Many noteworthy achievements were logged in individual and team sports in 2015. These creditable results bode well for the future of sport in Oman.

Sultanate sportspersons struck a rich haul of medals at the second edition of the *GCC Beach Games*, which were held in Doha, Qatar from April 2 to 9, 2015. Oman clinched a total of 13 medals that included seven gold, five silver and one bronze.

The *national beach soccer* team, coached by Talib Hilal, claimed the prestigious title while the national beach handball team and volleyball team took silver respectively. The other gold medals were won by the Omani sailors (Laser 4.7 and Optimist class) and the open water swimmers (5km and 10km – individual and team events).



The development of the Sultanate's sports infrastructure has been accompanied by an expansion in the public's engagement with fans and sports.





The national beach soccer team has brought home many awards from events contested abroad.

The beach soccer team also won the coveted Asian title in Doha in April and qualified for the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup for the second time. The team wrote a new chapter in the beach soccer history on July 11 when they won their first match at the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup in Espinho, Portugal.

Oman also hosted the fourth *GCC Women's Games* in March where the hosts' women finished overall runner-up with ten gold, nine silver and 14 bronze

The national team booked a place in the *World Beach Handball Championship* after finishing runner-up at the Asian Beach Handball Championship that was held from May 1-7 in Muscat. The 2016 worlds will be held in Hungary.

The national football team, popularly known as the Red Warriors, is currently participating in the joint qualifiers of the 2018 FIFA World Cup and 2019 Asian Cup. Oman, ranked 102 in the world, is pooled in Group D along



with fancied Iran, ranked 39th and No 1 in Asia, Turkmenistan, Guam and India.

The age-group teams brought a lot of cheers to the Sultanate. First the Under-16 team won the GCC title in September in Doha and weeks later the feat was repeated by the Under-19 boys, also in Doha. The U-16 team also emerged as Group B winners in the AFC U-16 Championship qualifiers held in Kyrgyzstan to book a spot in the main tournament, which will be held in India 2016.

Oman's football team clinched the silver at the World Military Games in South Korea in October. The team lost to Algeria 0-2 in the final.

The *national swimming team* captured a total of 31 medals – including seven gold, seven silver and 17 bronze – at the 25th GCC swimming Championships held In Doha, Qatar during the first week of September.

The *national power lifters team* won a total of 13 medals at the Asian Bench Press Championship, which was hosted by Oman in

Muscat for the first time from October 1-6. Oman won four gold, four silver and five bronze and the sub-junior and junior lifters were crowned overall champions at the championship. Earlier the Omani team won a total of 31 medals, including 15 gold, at the 2015 Asian Powerlifting Championship, held in Hong Kong in July.

Oman took the third place in the men's category at the West Asia *Weightlifting Championships*, held in Jordan from April 23 to 30, 2015.

Omani musclemen won medals at the 49th Asian Federation of *Bodybuilding and Fitness (AFBF) Championships* in Kitakyushu, Japan from June 5-8. Abdullah al Jabri won the gold in the 70kg class while Faisal al Matani and Ahmed al Maskari won silver medals in 75kg and 85kg categories respectively.

The national athletes also did proud when the team came third at the



A number of milestone projects were completed to bolster the existing sports infrastructure in the country.



19th Arab Athletics Championship for men and women in Bahrain (April 22-27, 2015). Oman's star sprinter Barakat al Harthy won the gold in the 100m final at the World Military Games in Incheon, South Korea in October with a time of 10.16sec, his career-best time.

On the *golf course*, Oman's Fahad al Kitani emerged as the champion in the gross category at the second GCC Under-15 Golf Championship in Dubai, UAE. The event was played from March 17-21. The national team came up with an all-round performance at the Dubai Creek Golf & Yacht Club to help Oman retain the team gross category crown. In the team gross category, Oman's score of 481 was enough to carry it to the top once again.

Oman's *cricketers* also made history when they qualified for the ICC World Cup Twenty20, to be played in India from March 11 to April 3, 2016. This is the first time the Omani team will take part in a cricket World Cup.

In *motor sports*, Oman Racing Team's Ahmad al Harthy, driving a Aston Martin V12 Vantage GT3 car, clinched the overall 'Silver Cup' title honours at the 2015 British GT Championship. Ahmad claimed the title at the Donington Park Grand Prix circuit in the UK on September 13, 2015.

Horse racing brought in many laurels with Royal Cavalry horses dominating world-class 'Pure Arabian' races in Qatar, France, the Netherlands and in England.

Oman's *tennis ace* Fatma al Nabhani won gold medals at the GCC Women's and Islamic Solidarity Games in Indonesia. Her consistency has helped her break into the top 400 players in world ranking.

Oman Sail

Established in 2008, Oman Sail is a pioneering national initiative that uses the power of sailing to inspire the youth of Oman and promote the country.



Many noteworthy achievements were logged in individual and team sports in 2015. These creditable results bode well for the future of sport in Oman.



This year, *Musandam-Oman Sail*, the Ministry of Tourism's flagship MOD70 boat, secured its second world record by breaking the Round Ireland Speed Sailing Record by nearly four hours. Oman Sail's two Extreme 40 catamarans, *Oman Air* and three-time champions *The Wave, Muscat*, visited seven different countries and competed on home waters in Muscat as part of the 2015 Extreme Sailing Series. *The Wave, Muscat* secured a podium position for the fifth consecutive year, while *Oman Air* made exciting progress with a new team. In September, Oman Sail's team onboard *The Sultanate of Oman* won the first ever Bullitt GC32 Racing Tour, after leading the fleet from start to finish.

At the GCC Optimist Championships in April, Oman claimed gold in the individual girl's class, gold and silver in the boy's section and silver in the Optimist Team Sailing.

In October 2015, the eyes of the sailing world will be on Oman as Oman Sail hosts the 2015 RSX World Windsurfing Championships and the Laser Radial World Championships at Al-Mussanah Sports City.

Omani sportsmen and sportswomen have demonstrated their skills and brought honour to their country.

OMANI ACHIEVEMENTS

In a successful procedure representing the first of its kind in the world, a medical team at Sultan Qaboos University Teaching Hospital managed to save the life of a 30-year-old woman and her foetus by implanting healthy cultivated valves into the pregnant woman's damaged heart.

Leading heart surgeon Dr Hilal bin Ali al-Sabti carried out the ground-breaking and minimally invasive 'valve-in-a-valve' procedure with the assistance of an integrated team of cardiac surgeons and consultants and anaesthesiologists at SQUH.

Using a catheter inserted through a small opening of less than 5 cms in the chest, the new valves were implanted inside the woman's damaged existing aortic and mitral valves. Assisting Dr Al-Sabti in the 3-hour procedure were: Dr Adel bin Hashim Al-Kindi, Dr. Tariq Alam Eddin, Dr. Hatim bin Ali Al-Lawati, Dr Nasser bin Abdullah Al-Kimani and Dr. Suresh Chingodi.



A medical team at the SQUH used modern therapeutic techniques to control the arterial flow rate from the heart of a patient suffering from atrial fibrillation, or 'quivering heart'.

The new technique involves the cultivation of a plug at the tip of the left atrium to moderate the flow in the coronary arteries.

The patient's heart condition had required him to take

blood-thinning and other anti-coagulant medications, which had resulted in multiple incidents of accidental haemorrhage. His medical consultants saw the revolutionary intervention as a superior solution for this patient, minimising his need for medicines that restricted his movements and resulted in frequent emergency hospital admissions.



The Sultanate, as represented by the National Centre for Statistics and Information, brought home the Special Achievements Award for Spatial Application Techniques at the ESRI (Environmental Systems Research Institute) World User Conference on Geographic Information Systems (GIS) held in San Diego, California on 20-24 July 2015.

The award recognises the best to use of a GIS application in serving local communities and citizens in a country.

Another major public recognition for the Sultanate, represented by the Public Authority for Consumer Protection, came in the form of the World Summit Award for Best Government Application for Mobile Phones 2014. The award, for the PACP's Consumer Electronic Guide, was formally presented in Abu Dhabi on 3 February 2015.

The PACP's win is an apt reward for its diligent and innovative efforts on behalf of the Omani consumer. It has been a frontrunner in the introduction of world-class technology to improve services to consumers, conscious in particular of the need to speed up the process of review, complaint and correction in maintaining and upgrading these services and the benefits of technology to this end.



OMANI ACHIEVEMENTS

A young student at Sultan Qaboos University Faculty of Chemistry has won the coveted 2014 Marlene DeLuca Award, named after the pioneering Swedish scientist. Butheina Abdullah Al-Haddabi took home the prize for her paper presented to the 18th International Symposium on Bioluminescence and Chemiluminescence at Uppsala, Sweden in September 2014.

Butheina's study, which examined the antioxidant content of honey samples using a novel microfluidics technique, was selected for its 'outstanding scientific contribution' to research and for the quality of the results obtained by her, as well as for the overall quality of her featured display.

The conference is one of the most important international conferences in the field of Bioluminescence and Chemiluminescence and selects just three research papers from submissions presented from around the world at the biennial event.



Air Corporal Athari bint Marhoon Al-Harrasiyah from the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) is the first Omani to have been awarded an International Training Certificate by the National Piping Centre in Scotland.

The award is a high honour for the young air corporal and an unprecedented accolade for RAFO and its celebrated pipe band. Such accreditation from the 'home of the bagpipes' will be a strong motivator for Oman's pipers and boost to their standing at international events and performances.



Dr Neela Al-Lamki of Sultan Qaboos University Faculty of Medicine has won the prestigious 2015 International Residency Educator of the Year Award for her outstanding contributions and commitment to clinical education. The award, granted annually by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, honours the world's most successful academics in the field and recognised her more than three decades of work in furthering medical education. It was presented to Dr Al-Lamki at a ceremony in Vancouver in October 2015. Dr Al-Lamki is Professor of Radiology at SQUH and Vice President for Academic Affairs and a Designated Institutional Official at the Oman Medical Specialty Board (OMSB)

The RAO Adventure Team of the Royal Army of Oman hoisted high the Sultanate's flag when they earned silver at the Cambrian Patrol Exercise in the United Kingdom in October 2015. The Cambrian Patrol is one of the most important annual military patrol exercises worldwide and armies from around the world take part.

The RAO team was the only Arab team among 126 teams taking part in the exercise. This was its second year participating, after it took home bronze in 2014.



The goal of the exercise is to promote a spirit of leadership and teamwork among team members, adapting them to operate in exceptionally cold and difficult environmental conditions, to move about

in mountainous areas, forests, snowbound terrain and landscapes of diverse vegetation, as well as to navigate minefields. Among the other topics covered are

the resolution of military dilemmas, identification of aircraft and tanks, the effective implementation of military patrols and swimming across rivers with a full set of equipment.



Heritage, Culture and the Arts



Heritage, Culture and the Arts:

Windows to Oman's civilisation

Safeguarding the nation's patrimony has been an integral part of Oman's contemporary Renaissance. The government of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said affords particular importance to heritage and culture, insofar as they constitute the bedrock of Oman's ongoing journey to progress. Equally crucial in the development of a modern state is a commitment to keep pace with science and technology. It is the combination of respect for tradition and an eagerness to embrace innovation that ensures a bright future for coming generations of Omanis.

The Ministry of Heritage and Culture, the Office of His Majesty the Sultan's Adviser for Cultural Affairs, the Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Science and other government organisations have pooled their efforts in order to spread and promote cultural awareness by actively investing in programmes to restore and maintain Oman's archaeological patrimony and by organising events to stimulate interest in Omani culture.

The year 2015 celebrated Nizwa as the Capital of Islamic Culture, as selected by the Islamic Organisation for Education, Science and Culture (ISESCO), bringing attention from around the Arab and Muslim world onto a city that has been a beacon of civilised society and significant repository of history and culture for more than twelve centuries.

A series of exciting events generated a festive mood in the city. Local and government agencies participated in arranging workshops, lectures and seminars and the Executive Committee charged with heading up the programme of festivities put together a full calendar of scientific and cultural events to celebrate the historical significance and landmark contributions of this important ancient capital.

Also marking the occasion was the founding of the Nizwa Cultural Centre, consisting of a theatre and public library, a children's library, science club, outdoor theatre, an art circle, music club, multi-purpose hall, antiquities storage area, and other facilities.

Meanwhile entries were being submitted in the fourth round of the Sultan Qaboos Award for Culture, Literature and the Arts, open to Omani and Arab candidates competing in three categories: studies in Arabic Language, Arabic Calligraphy and Children's Literature. This prize reaffirms the attention attached to cultural and intellectual endeavours by His Majesty the Sultan, a Royal gesture in support of artists, writers and scholars and a broader and enhanced interpretation of progress going forward.



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Restoration and Archaeology

The roots of Oman's civilisation lie deep in history, and its identity is closely aligned with its cultural heritage. As such, the Sultanate directs serious attention to the preservation and care of cultural and heritage sites. It has done so by engaging the most sophisticated and practical methods available to science, always observant of international standards of conservation, and aware of the unique meaning and value of such landmarks. While preserving for Omanis today an immediate connection with their historic past, this awareness has a practical aspect, in adding value to the growing tourist industry.

To acknowledge the contribution of the past in enriching the cultural life of today and to highlight the cultural heritage of the Sultanate, a constant programme of restoration and maintenance efforts rolls forward to ensure the lasting presence of historic sites, which benefit both local communities and visitors from other provinces and overseas.

The Ministry of Heritage and Culture has been responsible for the preservation and rehabilitation of numerous historical sites. Notable among these projects was the restoration of Harat al Bilad in the Wilayat of Manah, which has undergone extensive works, and Harat Al Busaid in the Wilayat of Adam, as well as Al Manikh Fort in the Wilayat of Dhank.

Restoration works at Al Hammam Fort in the Wilayat of Dama wa al Ta'iyin were initiated, and several projects were wound up successfully. Included in the latter were the rehabilitations of Aswad Fort in the Wilayat of Shinas, the Al Wasel Fort in the Wilayat of Badiya, the Al 'Adafin Fort in the Wilayat of Wadi Bani Khaled and the Abi Said Al Kadmi Complex in the Wilayat of Al Hamra'.

The inventory and documentation of historic settlements continues and the Ministry of Heritage and Culture, acting through its Cultural Documentation Project, implemented a major national project to protect a total of 1,039 historic settlements throughout the Sultanate. Among the most prominent of these were: Harat al Sulaif in the Wilayat of Ibri, Harat Fanja in the Wilayat of Bidbid, Harat al Saybani in the Wilayat of Nizwa, Harat al Yemen in the Wilayat of Izki and Harat al 'Aqr in the Wilayat of Bahla. Books have also been published by the Ministry outlining the fieldwork, settlement structure, architectural values and management goals, together with photographic documentation for each of these five *harah*.

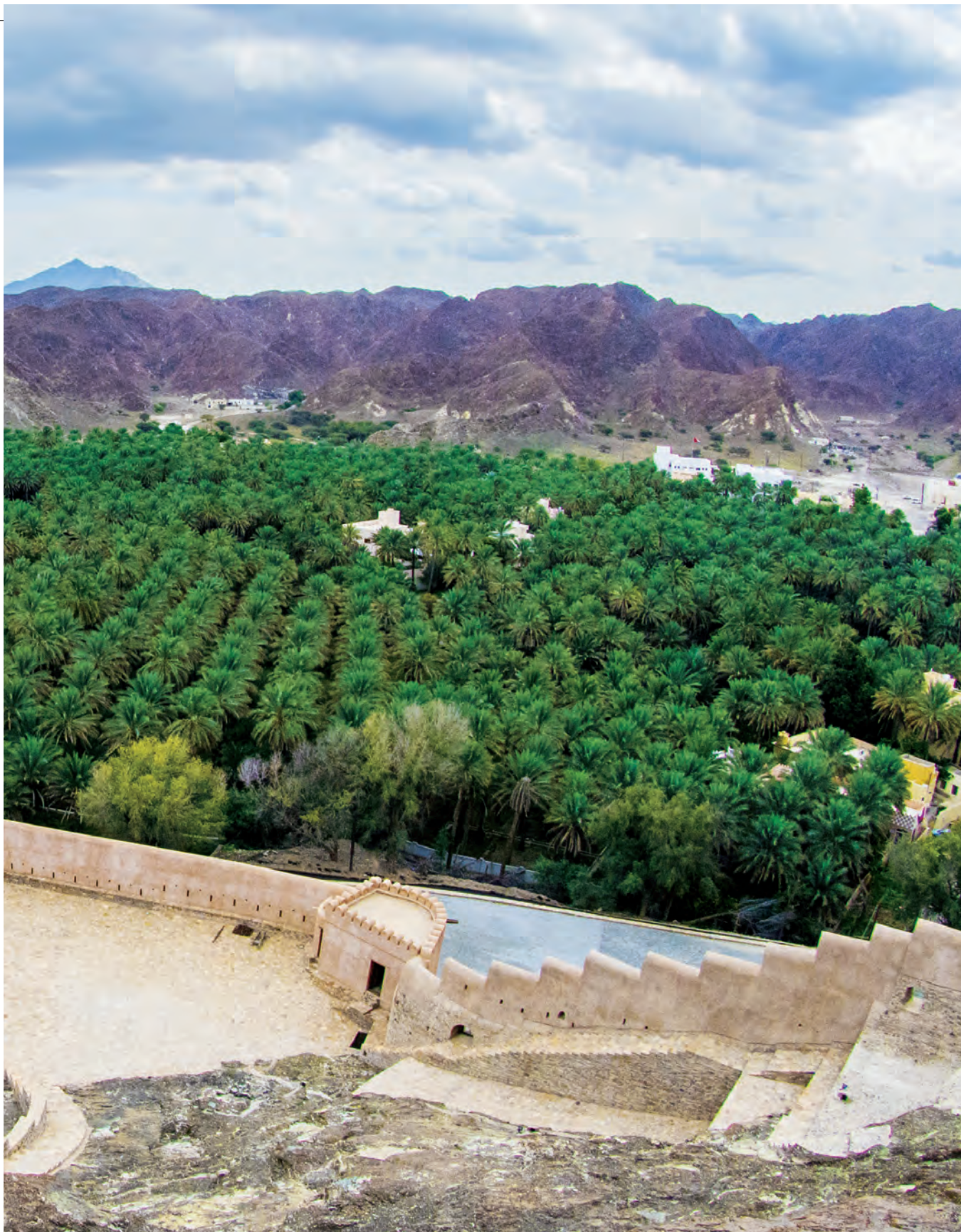
The Ministry made further progress on its programme of contemporary survey and excavation, which it is conducting in collaboration with a French archaeological mission from the National Centre for Prehistory. The current project to survey the coast of the Arabian Sea from the Governorate of South Sharqiyah to Dhofar will study and document human settlement dating from around the tenth years to the second millennia BC. The goal is to gain more knowledge of human settlement on the coast in prehistoric times and up



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An aerial view of Fort Sumail, encircled by palms.

to the mid-Holocene period. The mission has already documented several archaeological sites and Stone Age shell middens estimated to date to 7,000-4,000 BC in the Wilayat of Jaalan Bani Bu Ali, at Rimal Sharqiyah, at the Bar al Hikman and on the island of Masirah.

The Ministry of Heritage and Culture has prepared a programme to excavate for submerged artefacts, drawn up in accordance with internationally approved guidelines. The Sultanate will thus become a pioneer in this field regionally, as befits the prominence of its maritime history.

Museums ... windows into past glories

The Sultanate attaches great importance to its historical treasures. The Ministry of Heritage and Culture recognises the important role museums have to play in reflecting a people's contacts and interaction with other cultures, languages and societies;

at the same time, museums also help reinforce a society's own culture and promote an interest in its history, while highlighting how that history is linked to the overall history of mankind in general.

The Ministry of Heritage and Culture oversees a number of museums, including the Ministry of Heritage and Culture Museum, which opened in 1979, and the Natural History Museum, opened in 1985 at the Ministry's premises in Al Khuwair, highlights the treasures of Oman's natural environment and the wildlife of its deserts and mountains, as well as a section on fossils. The Children's Museum, opened in 1990, is a cultural and educational project, which explains science through a series of simplified demonstrations.

Opened in 1992, the Omani-French Museum includes historical documents on Omani-French trade relations dating from the 19th Century, as well as traditional costumes, jewellery, artefacts and models of Omani and French ships.



The National Museum, which inaugurated its trial run on 23 November 2014, views its mission as both cultural and humanitarian: on the one hand to raise public awareness and mirror important and noble values.



In Sohar Fort, a museum was opened in 1993 and its contents deal with the history of the city of Sohar and its cultural and economic relations. In 2008, the Sayyid Faisal bin Ali Museum was opened inside the building of the Ministry of Heritage and Culture and it contains a section on traditional weapons.

The National Museum, which inaugurated its trial run on 23 November 2014, views its mission as both cultural and humanitarian: on the one hand to raise public awareness and mirror important and noble values, to enliven the sense of connection of citizens, residents and visitors with Oman and its history and heritage and culture; and to preserve the physical and intellectual acquisitions handed down from Oman's history, the cultural and artistic achievements in all their manifestations, and highlight this great legacy of its past.

The museum's various exhibits are rich with artefacts and manuscripts representing Oman's long history, beginning in ancient times and continuing

Museums promote the culture of a community and foster a sense of engagement with history. (Here: The Natural History Museum)

**The Omani pavilion
at Expo Milano 2015,
illustrating the diversity
and colour of Oman's
dramatic landscape.**

up to the modern era, and with halls recounting the narrative of each era of this chronology.

The Ministry of Defence runs the Sultan's Armed Forces Museum, which opened at Bait al Falaj Fort in Ruwi in 1988 and contains exhibits highlighting Oman's military history. These include traditional and modern weapons, as well as some documents and manuscripts. The Muscat Gate Museum, which takes the visitor on a tour of Muscat, highlights the city's growth from a commercial harbour to a prosperous capital city. It contains displays illustrating the city's development from ancient times. Muscat Municipality runs the Bait al Baranda Visitors Centre and Museum, which presents a potted history of the city of Muscat and is also a venue for exhibitions and training courses.

The Office of His Majesty the Sultan's Advisor on Cultural Affairs oversees the Land of Frankincense Museum, which opened on 23 July 2007



as part of Al Baleed Archaeological Park in the Governorate of Dhofar. It has a historical hall with six sections documenting Oman's history as a whole over the ages, and another hall which exclusively highlights Oman's maritime history.

The Oil and Gas Exhibition Centre in Qurm portrays the history of the formation of oil over different periods and the stages of its extraction. It is a depiction of the journey of oil discovery in the Sultanate.

The Central Bank of Oman's Currency Museum, situated within the bank's premises, reviews the chronology of currency exchange in the Sultanate and showcases both old and modern currencies, including bank notes and coins which were exchanged during the early stages of the Islamic era.

The Maritime Museum in the Wilayat of Sur, established in 1987, features many aspects of the Sultanate's seafaring heritage. It showcases photographs and models of different types of Omani boats, as well as portraits of boat

captains, sailors, shipbuilders and ports which the Omanis used to visit, sailing and navigation equipment, charts, maps and related manuscripts.

Also, there are privately-owned museums such as Bait al Zubair Museum in Muscat, which opened in 1998 and exhibits a collection of artefacts and costumes which represent different governorates of the Sultanate. Ghaliya's Museum of Modern Art, opened in 2011 on the Mutrah corniche, has rooms representing the concept of a modern house from the beginning of the 1950s to the mid-1970s.

Cultural programmes and relations

The role of Oman's cultural providers is to promote the dissemination and exchange of culture in the context of direct bilateral relations and in coordination with GCC, Arab and external organisations within an over arching vision of international cooperation and openness.



The Maritime Museum in Sur, established in 1987, features many aspects of the Sultanate's seafaring heritage. It showcases photographs and models of different types of Omani boats.



Official and unofficial bodies involved as partners in cultural activities such as the Ministry of Heritage and Culture, the Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Sciences, the Literary Association, the Cultural Club, Omani cultural societies (e.g. the Oman Writers Society, Oman Theatre Society, Oman Cinema Society and the Omani Journalists Association) work to establish cultural ties with all countries.

They also participate in joint meetings of committees and organisations, sign international cultural agreements in cooperation with the Ministry of Legal Affairs and hold seminars and cultural weeks promoting Omani culture.

At local level, official and unofficial cultural providers participate in cultural events both within the Sultanate and beyond, while fostering links among Oman's intellectuals and writers and encouraging them to print and publish their writings and contribute to forums and other

activities nationally and regionally. Cultural weeks are also organised to further enhance these efforts.

The Sultanate also organises events and activities to foster the development of artistic and literary talent and creativity and to raise standards of creative output. This includes programmes that encourage the skills associated with artistic endeavour and promote the product of this work, including encouraging the publication and dissemination of the printed word at home and abroad.

Oman seeks to develop cultural links by means of joint cultural programmes with other GCC states. To this end, the GCC Cultural Committee holds periodic meetings to enhance the quality of input by citizens of member states in order to improve the level and success of their contributions to cultural events.



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International book exhibitions and Cultural Days

Book exhibitions and fairs in the Sultanate and abroad are considered an important aspect of depicting the diversity of Oman's culture. The Sultanate takes part in the most important international book fairs and its pavilions have had a strong presence at these events.

The Sultanate, represented by the Ministry of Information, Ministry of Heritage and Culture and Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, participated as an honoured guest in activities associated with the 28th Tehran International Book Fair, which ran from 6 May 2015.

The national pavilion had sections for works in the cultural, literature and economics categories, as well as travel in Oman. It also hosted lectures on literary themes, which took place on the sidelines of the main event. The Omani stand also featured a display of artworks and historic, heritage and tourist images. A special section displayed a visual narrative of Omani dress in its many variations from all provinces of the Sultanate.

Muscat International Book Fair is an annual highlight of the international book scene.



The Sultanate is a regular participant in international exhibitions, where it presents positive images of Oman's past and current achievements.

The Ministry of Heritage and Culture, Ministry of Information and Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs represented the Sultanate at some 25 important international book exhibitions, in which Oman participates every year under the umbrella of the Sultanate of Oman Exhibit. The most prominent of these are the Cairo International Book Fair, the Casablanca International Book Fair and exhibitions in Frankfurt, London, Paris, the United States, Palestine, Riyadh, Abu Dhabi, Algiers, Khartoum, Tunis, Sharjah, Kuwait, Doha and Tehran.

Oman registered an active presence at many international exhibitions and fairs, where export products in all areas of activity were showcased, supported by subsidies to facilitate participation by Omani enterprises. The Sultanate used such occasions as opportunities to demonstrate what the country had to offer, through displays illustrating scientific and artistic contributions of merit.



The Muscat International Book Fair ranks among the top ten such forums in the Arab region and occupies a distinguished position internationally as a supportive event benefiting the publishing industry globally.

This year the Muscat Fair celebrated the twentieth year of its existence, a landmark marked by one of the biggest ever turnouts, with more publishers participating in larger exhibition halls and more book titles on display. A total of 638 publishing houses from 25 countries took part, offering 180,000 titles, of which some 65% were new works. Moreover the 20th year of the Fair offered a full parallel programme of cultural events and activities, which registered valuable contributions from around the creative world. A programme of cultural stimulation specifically directed at children was also a feature, and a guest of honour initiative by the Fair embracing the Nizwa Capital of Islamic Culture 2015 project

added an exciting dimension to that celebration.

Among the most rewarding forums in disseminating awareness of Oman's cultural legacy and historical heritage are the Cultural Days and Weeks organized by Oman. Between 11 and 15 November 2014, Brunei Darussalam hosted an Omani Cultural Days event, as a positive reflection of cultural exchange between the two Sultanates. It was also an opportunity to showcase the contribution Oman has made and continues to make internationally in this important corner of the civilised world. Oman's Cultural Days in Brunei were a significant and popular success, with great interest shown at official and public levels, and offered an understanding of the broad principles of openness to and understanding of other cultures that is at the root of Oman's relations with the countries of the world.



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The Ministry of Heritage and Culture has managed to collect an impressive 4,600 manuscripts, including copies of the Holy Quran, various writings on Prophetic traditions and exegesis, jurisprudence etc.

A legacy that impacts the future

Documents and manuscripts are powerful repositories of the product of man's creativity over the ages, of science and knowledge in the various areas of human endeavour. The Sultanate, as other nations, carefully preserves important and rare historic documents and manuscripts, the works of scholars and poets and the experiences and conclusions of scientists on their respective journeys of discovery. Within these manuscripts resides the spirit and cultural knowledge of life as experienced by exceptional individuals throughout the ages.

The Ministry of Heritage and Culture thus collects documents representing Oman's cultural and intellectual heritage, using the services of its National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA). This body is a pillar of the heritage sector and exercises a crucial role in this capacity, seeking out and collecting manuscripts, documents and items of historical interest, archiving and restoring these valuable artefacts and products of fertile and innovative minds.

The Ministry of Heritage and Culture focuses on assembling these national and intellectual treasures from private collections and saving, studying and as necessary restoring them, where they have been torn or defiled, or separated from related papers arising from exposure to humidity or dust or improper storage.





The Ministry has in this manner managed to collect an impressive 4,600 manuscripts, including copies of the Holy Quran, various writings on Prophetic traditions and exegesis, jurisprudence, literature, history, medicine, astronomy, marine science, chemistry and the *falaj* irrigation system. These manuscripts are archived, scanned and published after cross-checking. More than 650 documents, covering a wide spectrum of scientific and human knowledge, have been edited, translated and published.

The National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA), meanwhile, has succeeded since its establishment in collecting documents and written material of direct concern to the Sultanate from countries with which it had sustained contact in the past and which have retained the records in their archives; as well as from private citizens inside the Sultanate. The overriding purpose is to preserve the nation's historical legacy and the record of the most significant historical and cultural episodes of its past. This is accomplished in various ways, and through various activities, through research and study and by encouraging scientific and intellectual scholarship.

Statistics show that the NRAA has assembled more than a million documents and 35,613 manuscripts, in addition to maps, photographs, postage stamps and currencies.

Collecting oral histories that record the unique experiences of historical events by those who lived through them makes a valuable gift to posterity.



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The Ministry of Heritage and Culture's permanent archives exhibition constitutes a valuable epistemological resource for those interested in furthering their knowledge of culture and travel in Oman, and the geographical and historical factors which shaped Omani society and its foreign relations through the ages.

The NRAA participated in several international seminars and conferences in 2014 and 2015, including the "3rd International Conference: Oman's Role in Islamic Civilisation and Culture in the Countries of the African Great Lakes," held in the Republic of Burundi in December 2014, and the seminar "Oman in French Documents", held in collaboration with the Arab World Institute in Paris in April 2015.



The Literary Forum and the Cultural Club

The Cultural Club promotes cultural activities in the Sultanate by organising scholarly events for writers and thinkers, enabling them to open channels of communication with their peers locally and internationally.

The National Book Programme offers opportunities for publication to writers and academics of genuine merit and helped bring recognition to new titles in the fields of culture and intellectual exploration.

The Literary Forum also organises a number of cultural seminars and poetry evenings which afford budding writers access to the Omani literary scene.

The Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Sciences

The Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Sciences (SQHCCS), is a cultural institution affiliated to the Diwan of Royal Court. It is a legal entity which seeks to foster ties and aspects of cooperation with cultural



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establishments in other countries. It works to clarify the definition of what represents Omani culture and encourages Omani youth to take advantage of research, studies and opportunities pioneered by the Centre.

Towards the achievement of these goals, the SQHCCS conducts studies and scientific research and organises conferences and seminars in areas related to culture and sciences. It also oversees the affairs of the Sultan Qaboos Mosques, Institutes of Islamic Sciences and Holy Quran Schools under the jurisdiction of the Centre. This is in addition to supervising Sultan Qaboos cultural centres and academic chairs abroad, the Omani Society for Fine Arts, the Oud Hobbyists Association, the Photographic Society, the Oman Traditional Music Centre and the Sultan Qaboos College for Teaching Arabic to Non-Native Speakers and it administers the Sultan Qaboos Award for Culture, Arts and Letters.

On 22 December 2014, the Centre held a ceremony to honour the Arab winners of the Third Sultan Qaboos Award for Culture, the Arts and Literature in the designated fields of Educational Studies in Culture, Photography and

Official representatives and members of the public intermingle at popular literary and cultural forums.



Sultan Qaboos College for Teaching Arabic to Non-Native Speakers provides a window for expatriates on Oman's language and culture.

Drama Scriptwriting. The Fourth Award in 2015 is being contested in the designated fields of Arabic Culture, Calligraphy, and Children's Literature. This Fourth prize round has been opened up to all Arab writers without restriction. The winner of the Sultan Qaboos Award for Culture, the Arts and Literature is honoured with the Sultan Qaboos Order of Merit for Culture, the Arts and Literature as well as benefiting from a prize fund worth 100,000 OR (one hundred thousand Omani Rials).

On 29 December 2014, the Centre honoured the winners of the 24th Sultan Qaboos Competition for the Memorisation of the Holy Quran, in which 1,806 entrants of both sexes participated.

Earlier, in August 2012, the Centre marked the start of studies at the Sultan Qaboos College for Teaching Arabic to Non-Native Speakers, which is situated in the Wilayat of Manah, Dakhiliyah Governorate. The establishment of the College reflects His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said's interest in promoting the Arabic language and Omani culture. Each group



of students undergoes an eight-week course, which also includes a cultural programme and various social activities that give them the opportunity to experience Omani society at first hand.

By the end of its third year the College had processed 14 groups of students, a total of 342 individuals, or some 114 students for each of the three years. The College welcomes students from around the world, and to date has interacted with 22 different nationalities. The majority, however, are from the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia.

Again, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos established the biennial Sultan Qaboos Scientific Chairs symposium by Royal Decree and the third symposium was held in October 2014 entitled: “Managing Water Resources for Sustainable Development” at the University of Tokyo’s Ito Hall. Oman supports the Sultan Qaboos Chair for Middle

Eastern Studies at the same university.

On His Majesty the Sultan’s instructions, the Centre held a “Human Rapprochement and Harmony Week” in the week of 15-19 February 2015-- for the fourth consecutive year. The Week promotes His Majesty’s vision of service to the cause of mutual understanding and rapport between religions and civilisations. It marks the particular respect paid by the Sultanate to the implementation of UN Resolution 65/5 of 2010, in its designation of the first week of February of every year as a week of harmony between religions

The Oman Centre for Traditional Music (OCTM), which was transferred to the Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Sciences under Royal Decree No 24/2013, carries out research into traditional Omani music and collects, records and documents songs from the Sultanate’s popular and oral musical heritage.

On 15-18 December 2014, the first ever forum for historians of Arab



The establishment of the Sultan Qaboos College for Teaching Arabic reflects His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said’s interest in promoting the Arabic language and Omani culture.





The Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) is a powerful symbol of the dialogue that bridges the many strands of culture and the arts represented within Oman, as well as in the larger world beyond.



music, under the title “Towards a Contemporary Reading of the History of Arab Music”, was presented by the Centre, attended by a gathering of prominent historians, musicians and scholars of Arab music from around the Arab World.

The Omani Society for Fine Arts helps to support and develop the fine arts in the Sultanate and raise the level of awareness in the community about the visual arts and culture. As well as protecting the arts, it also seeks to enrich them by encouraging them to derive their inspiration from the Omani and Arab cultural heritage and the intellectual and aesthetic values of the society in which they have their roots. At the same time, it aims to ensure that the artists’ innovative work enables them to enjoy the status they deserve in the community.

The Society has sponsored many of the events and activities that serve arts by fostering the development of artistic and cultural awareness. Its goal is to highlight Oman’s respect for its artists and the value of their creative output.

In January 2015, the Society opened a branch in Sohar in the Governorate of North Batinah. This well-equipped branch has two full studios, one each for male and female artists.

The Photographic Society of Oman has a number of international achievements to its credit and has diversified its activities to keep abreast with the technological advances in the field and the increase in the number of photographers seeking to display their talents in national and international events. Photographers have a range of events available to them to contest, both at home and further afield.

The Lute Players Association organised many activities and hosted a number of musicians and orchestras in order to exchange information and expertise and promote the pursuit of this musical genre in the Sultanate.



The Royal Opera House Muscat

The Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) is a powerful symbol of the dialogue that bridges the many strands of culture and the arts represented within Oman, as well as in the larger world beyond. The embodiment of a vision of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, it offers audiences an arena where they may appreciate values of entertainment inherent in the Arab and Omani identity, while broadening that stage to include offerings from other cultures around the world, in this way opening minds and hearts to the creativity and diversity of the world in which we live.

The fifth Royal Opera House season (mid-September 2014 to end-May 2015) included performances of opera, ballet, flamenco dance, classical evenings for instrument and voice, jazz and concerts and performances from around the world.

**The Royal Oman
Orchestra celebrates its
30th anniversary on
17 September 2015.**







“Badiya Boy”, the image that won gold for photographer Habib bin Sulayman Abdul Rahim Al Zadjali at the International Exhibition of Photography in Bulgaria.





“Energy Hunter” earned photographer Ali bin Hamad Khalaf Al Ghaffri a gold medal at the International Exhibition of Photography in Bosnia-Herzegovina.



Economic Development



Economic Development:

Government spending stimulates economic growth

Oman has one of those Gulf economies in which oil provides the basic source of revenue and is used to finance the country's infrastructure projects, including the construction of schools, hospitals and roads and the provision of health care and free education, as well as electricity, water, telecommunications and sewerage utilities for the towns, villages and other populated areas. From the start of the Sultanate's modern Renaissance on 23rd July 1970 His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said began to lay the foundations of a diversified economy capable of meeting the needs of Omani society and funding its programmes. Meanwhile, the system of five-year plans which the Sultanate has adopted since 1976 has enabled it to develop the country on a sound basis which guarantees that its oil revenues are distributed fairly throughout its far-flung regions.

The fall in crude oil prices to below US\$100 per barrel in late 2014 led to the introduction of a range of temporary precautionary measures aimed at safeguarding the stability of Oman's financial and economic position and the gains of its development process, while ensuring that its citizens' daily lives and living standards, the entitlements of its public sector employees and the government's public and private sector employment plans remained unaffected.

Despite the challenges posed to the global economy in general by the fall in crude prices – and particularly to those economies that depend upon oil as a primary source of revenue – Oman's position has remained strong thanks to the stability of its own economy and its solid infrastructure, as well as the legislative framework supporting its economic and investment activity, the steady growth of its non-oil sectors and its trained and qualified national manpower. In addition to all these, its general financial position, banking system, monetary policies and currency have remained sound and stable, so it is well placed to handle unexpected developments in the global financial arena.



The system of five-year plans which the Sultanate has adopted since 1976 has enabled it to develop the country on a sound basis which guarantees that its oil revenues are distributed fairly throughout its far-flung regions.



During much of 2014 the price of crude remained in excess of US\$ 100 and this was reflected in positive growth figures for the national economy, underpinned by high oil prices, an increase in non-oil activities and strong domestic demand. This resulted in an average growth rate of 4 per cent in 2014 – unchanged from 2013.

The figures show that Oman's GDP at current prices rose to RO31.2 billion in 2014, up from around RO30.1 billion in 2013. Major factors here were an 8.7 per cent overall rise in non-oil activities to around RO18.7 billion, while oil activities contributed RO14.8 billion to the country's GDP.

The fall in oil prices in 2015 led to a drop in GDP at current prices during the first quarter of the year to RO6.5 billion – down from around RO7.6 billion over the same period in 2014. This was a result of the fall in the GDP contribution from oil activities from some RO3.8 billion to RO2.4 billion. Non-oil activities, on the other hand, showed a 4.1 per cent rise to RO4.4 billion.

The 2015 General State Budget

The Sultanate's fiscal policy is designed to meet a number of major objectives in line with the general goals approved in the 8th Five-Year Plan (2011-2015) and its financial framework. In this connection, the 2015 General State Budget seeks to promote sustained, balanced economic and social development, the main aims of which include: continued investment expenditure to maintain economic growth levels and stimulate domestic demand; the continued implementation and completion of current development projects in various sectors in accordance with their scheduled timetable; implementation of the new priority projects approved for 2015 under the current Five-Year Plan (2011-2015), in addition to further steps to upgrade and improve public services, with particular focus on the social sectors such as health, education, housing, social welfare and other support programmes; continued support – and incentives – for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), the implementation of programmes designed to boost their productivity, and expansion of the scope of the *Rafd* Fund's programmes and services in the Sultanate's governorates; further measures to upgrade and improve the efficiency and productivity of the oil and gas sectors; further steps to raise standards of public and university education and bolster the effectiveness of expenditure on those sectors; continued funding for scholarships at home and abroad in the higher education and technological fields in order to enable Omanis to gain greater access to higher education; and funding for job-related training programmes.



During much of 2014 the price of crude remained in excess of US\$ 100 and this was reflected in positive growth figures for the national economy,



Public spending approved under the 2015 Budget totalled around RO14.1 billion – a rise of 4.5 per cent compared with the estimated public spending approved for 2014. Overall public revenues were estimated at around RO11.6 billion – a 1 per cent drop compared with the revenues approved for 2014, creating an estimated deficit of RO 2.5 billion – i.e. 21 per cent of revenues and 8 per cent of GDP.

With regard to public spending, the 2015 General State Budget has estimated current expenditure at some RO9.6 billion and investment expenditure at RO3.2 billion, covering spending on development projects, oil and gas capital production projects and projects being implemented by government companies. Spending on support programmes has been estimated at RO1.1 billion.

Where public revenues are concerned, overall revenue has been estimated at RO11.6 billion, including oil at RO9.1 billion - or 79 per cent of the total - with non-oil income at RO2.4 billion accounting for the remaining 21 per cent.

The Budget approved financial allocations totalling around RO 9 billion to cover the social sectors' requirements in fields such as education, health, housing, training, social support and other services. This is the same as the level in the 2014 Budget.

The Budget allocated RO3 billion for education. This is designed to cover the opening and operation of 41 new schools in various parts of the Sultanate. Some RO1.6 billion was also allocated for the health sector in order to fund the opening and operation of 11 new hospitals and health centres. Around RO95 million was earmarked for training programmes at home and abroad, as well as RO129 million for social security and welfare and RO2.3 billion for housing, including RO55 million for housing assistance schemes overseen by the Ministry of Housing (comprising the construction of dwellings in various parts of the country), as well as RO15 million for housing loans on easy terms and RO15.4 million for housing loans from the Oman Housing Bank. Some RO1.8 billion was allocated for subsidies and exemptions; this includes subsidised interest rates on housing and development loans, as well as electricity, water and fuel subsidies and subsidies on some basic foodstuffs.

Financial performance in 2014

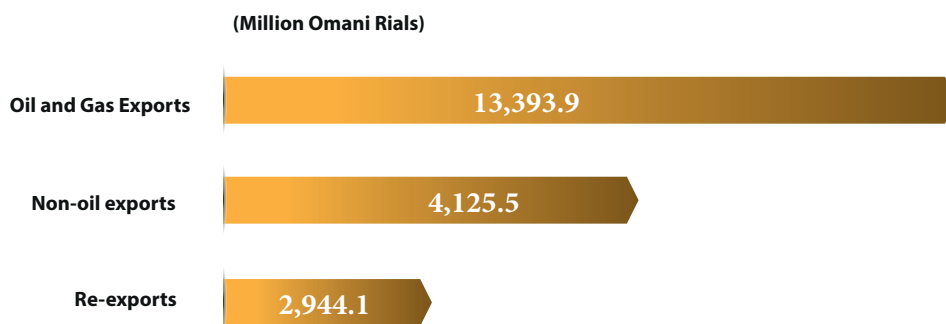
In 2014 the Sultanate's revenues declined to RO14.1 billion, down from RO14.2 billion in 2013, while public spending rose to RO15.1 billion, up from RO13.9 billion the previous year. Oil revenues, at RO10.2 billion,



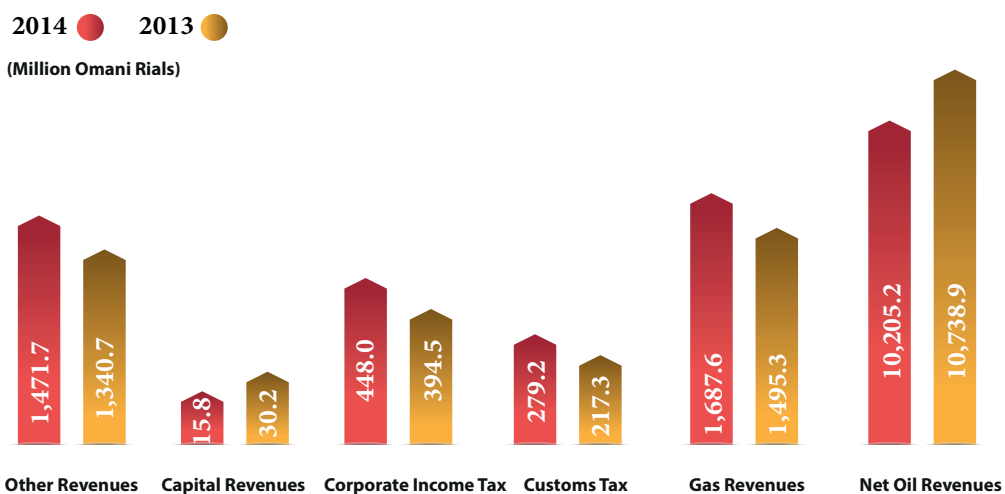
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Value of Oman's commodity exports in 2014



The value of Government revenues In 2013 - 2014



accounted for 72.3 per cent of the total, while gas revenues totalled around RO1.7 billion. Customs tariffs generated RO279.2 million while company income tax accounted for RO 448 million. Capital revenues totalled RO15.8 million while other sources yielded RO1.4 billion.

The decline in oil prices in the world markets led to a 36.2 per cent fall in government revenues during the first five months of 2015 - to RO3.8 billion from a total of RO 6 billion over the same period in 2014. However, during the first five months of 2015 the Sultanate was able to limit its expenditure to RO5.3 billion; this compares with a figure of RO5.8 billion over the same period in 2014.

The Five-Year Development Plans

Ever since the introduction of its first Five-Year Plan (1976-1980) the Sultanate has implemented a system of five-year development plans aimed at ensuring balanced development across the country's different governorates in line with a series of clear, well-prepared and manageable programmes. Its financial commitments under its 8th Five-Year Plan (2011-2015) have been the biggest in its history, rising to around RO59 billion by the beginning of 2014, compared with an originally approved figure of some RO43 billion – a rise of 37 per cent – in the wake of various items of additional expenditure during the first three years of the Plan.

In 2016 the Sultanate will embark on its 9th Five-Year Plan, which will continue until 2020. Its main focus will be on an economic diversification strategy which will increase the GDP contributions of sectors such as agriculture, industry, tourism, fishing and mining, leading to an expansion of the country's economic productivity base and the creation of new job opportunities for Omanis. The Plan also provides for significant investment in the development of Oman's human resources, giving priority to education, training and projects which provide employment for nationals. It also attaches importance to the social, cultural and heritage fields, as well as to regional development, financial sustainability and a new approach to planning inspired by the best international practices, while involving the broadest possible participation of the community and ensuring that graduates from the educational system are equipped with the knowledge and skills demanded by the labour market. This will require close co-ordination between employment policies and economic diversification strategies, while reinforcing the private sector's role in the country's development.

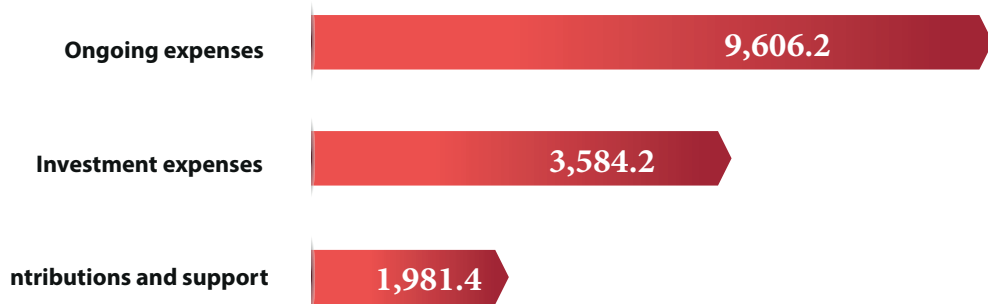


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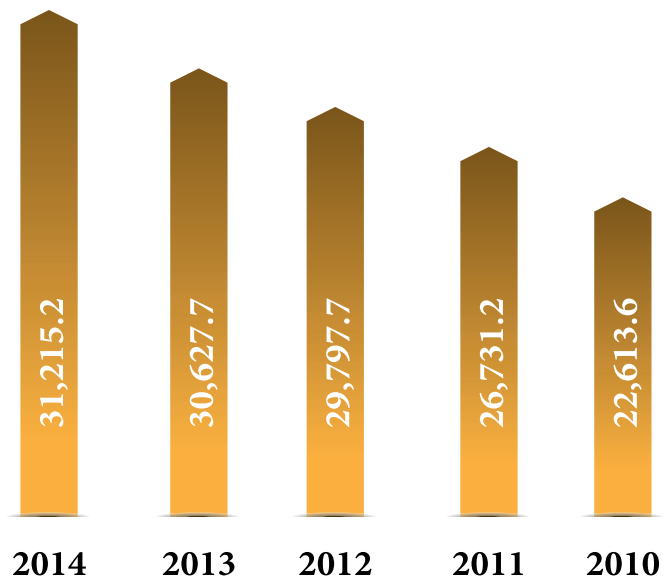


Total public spending in 2014

(Million Omani Rials)



GDP at Current Prices from 2010 To 2014



Oman 2040

The “Oman 2040” vision of the Sultanate’s economic future aims to ensure greater prosperity for the Omani people by achieving a series of objectives that will contribute to the country’s economic diversification. Work began on this vision project from an early stage of the country’s Renaissance.

The new vision seeks to identify the available opportunities and make the best possible use of the significant elements of each of the economic sectors, particularly the country’s airports, seaports, industrial estates and available resources. The aim is to diversify the sources of national income and create more “self-employment projects” while affirming the importance of balanced development across the country’s regions in accordance with the sizes and needs of the different governorates.

Since its formation in 2013 the Main Oman 2040 Vision Committee has held several meetings during which it has stressed the need for a vision of the country’s future that meets the needs of the Omani community. Its brief is to recognise the realities of the country’s economic and social situation and take an objective view of the future so that its conclusions can provide a guide and basic frame of reference for planning operations over the next two decades.

During the course of its meetings the Committee agreed that a Vision Conference with international participation should be held during the first half of the 9th Five-Year Development Plan (2016-2020). It also agreed to take steps to identify future national priorities so that these could form a basis for discussions with the different parties concerned, while providing the guidelines for the vision of Oman’s future.

The Committee also agreed that work should begin on a plan for interaction between the different sections of society and that a programme should be established to ensure strategic co-ordination between the different government sectors in order to ensure that they are compatible with the Oman 2040 Vision. It was recognized that the evaluation reports on the current Oman 2020 Vision would have a useful part to play in generating further economic benefits for the national economy.

The business environment

Oman has an open economic policy in its approach to the world markets and it is a member of – and signatory to – several regional and international economic organisations and agreements.

It has been able to attract domestic and foreign investment thanks to a variety of positive factors including security, political stability, a free



Oman has been able to attract domestic and foreign investment thanks to a variety of positive factors including security, political stability, a free economy.



economy, a system that allows foreigners to own up to 100 per cent of projects, no restrictions on exporting funds and profits, no personal income tax and a standard tax rate of 12 per cent annually for all Omani and foreign companies and establishments. The government also provides loans for a range of projects at low interest rates with comfortable repayment periods, as well as attractive company tax exemptions for up to ten years.

In other moves to create a more attractive business climate the Sultanate has introduced further improvements and facilities in line with the recommendations of international institutions and the demands of the domestic and foreign private sectors. Several government departments have been involved, as well as the Council of Oman (comprising the State Council and the Consultation Council), the specialised committees and the municipal councils, the aim being to provide the basic needs and utilities required for economic activities, while at the same time upgrading the legal framework for protecting investors' rights, implementing commercial regulations and controlling rising production costs. The legislation governing foreign capital investment is also amended from time to time to increase the Sultanate's attractiveness as a destination for foreign investment.

In a further move designed to improve the quality of its services for investors, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry introduced its E-Commercial Registration facility in June 2015 as part of its project to upgrade its one-stop "Invest Easy" services. The E-Commercial Registration service is one of the Ministry's main Stage Three services introduced as part of its programme aimed at upgrading its one-stop system. It is also a significant new initiative in the country's e-services transformation process under which all the one-stop facilities will become self-service operations. This will enable the investor to complete his commercial business electronically, at any time and wherever he may happen to be.

"Invest Easy" consists of six stages. During the first three stages 23 electronic self-service facilities were introduced, enabling investors and business people to access them via the internet. The project is being implemented under the government's standard system of integrated information technology procedures, which are currently being implemented by 15 government departments. The system is being expanded and will eventually encompass 29 government departments and private sector bodies.

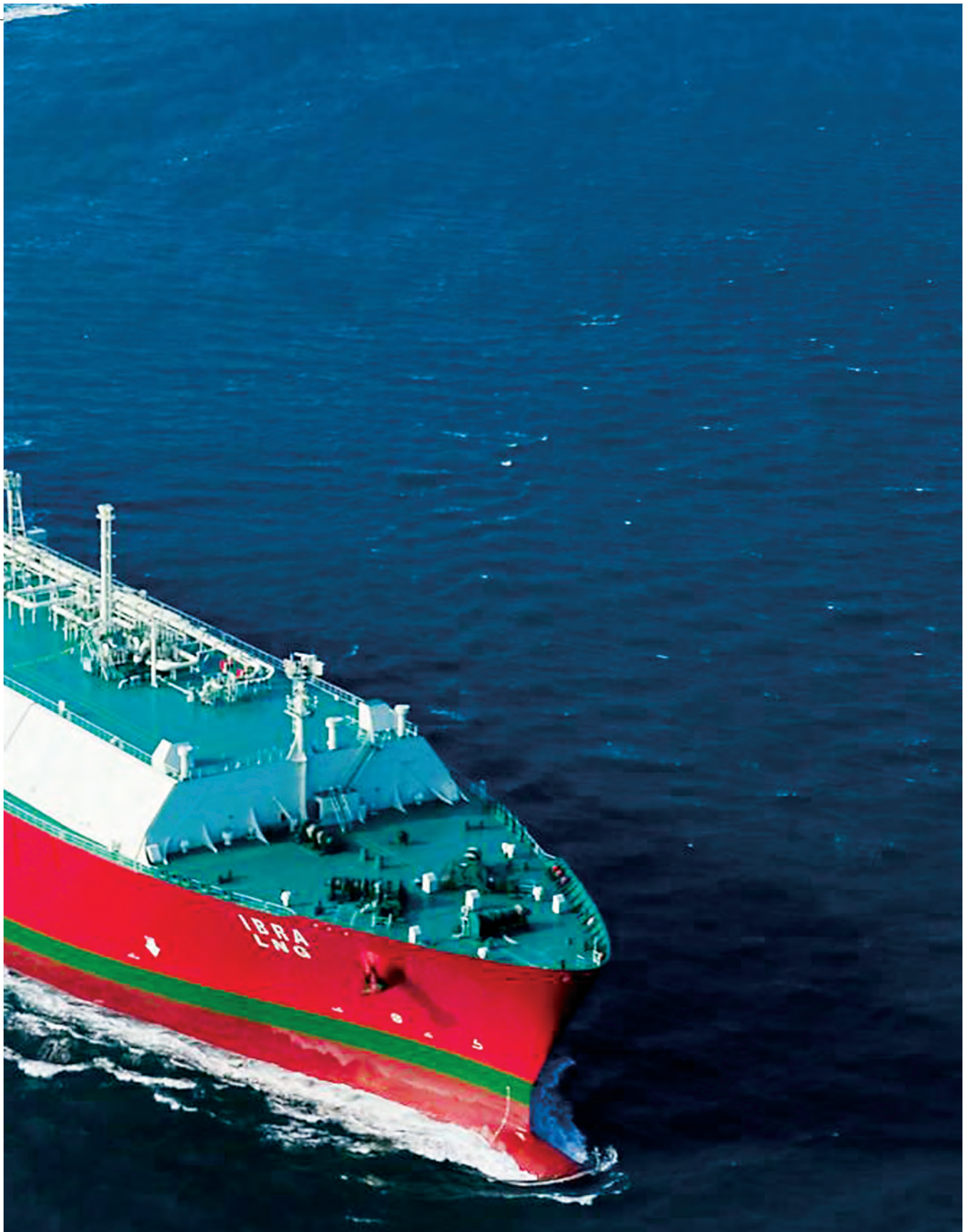
The "Invest Easy" electronic portal is the first Omani project to endorse and issue electronically signed certificates and the first project to endorse all documentation systems. Investors can now download copies of their digitally signed certificates without the need to visit the Ministry or any of its branches in person.



The Ministry of
Commerce and
Industry introduced
its E-Commercial
Registration facility in
June 2015 as part of its
project to upgrade its
one-stop "Invest Easy"
services.







The gas tanker “Ibra” is one of the giant vessels operated by the Oman Shipping Company

As a result of its sound policies, foreign investment in the Sultanate stood at around RO 13.6 billion in 2013. This is more or less the same level that it was at the end of 2012.

Oman's economic policies have won it plaudits from around the world and it receives high rankings in international economic reports. The 2014-2015 Global Competitiveness Report published by the World Economic Forum (WEF) ranked it as the country with the lowest rate of inflation on the Global Competitiveness Index.

With its low inflation, Oman saw a slight rise in its own inflation rate in 2014 to 1 per cent. At the end of that year the Consumer Price Index stood at 102.5 points.

The WEF's Global Competitiveness Index provides a comprehensive evaluation of national competitiveness around the world and analyses institutions, policies and other factors that determine national productivity levels. The Sultanate maintained its position at eighth place in the Balanced Government Budget Index and came fourth in the Government Public Debt Index, thereby improving its position by one place compared with its ranking in the 2013-2014 report. In another indicator of general economic environment, it also moved up one place to 33rd in its creditworthiness ranking in comparison with its position in the 2013-2014 report.

Oman was classed as the seventh most popular tourist destination in the 2015 Global Islamic Tourism Index, while in the Basel Institute on Governance's 2014 annual report on the prevention of money-laundering it was placed at the top of the list of Arab states for its efforts to prevent money-laundering and the financing of terrorism; the report ranked it 29th out of 162 states around the world.

The WEF's 2014-2015 Global Competitiveness Report gave the Sultanate a global ranking of 46th out of 144 economies around the world.

The Tender Board

In 2014 the Tender Board awarded 124 government tenders subject to the provisions of the Tender Law and regulations, costing a total of around RO1.3 billion. This compares with a figure of 206 tenders awarded in 2013 at a cost of RO1.8 billion.

The main tenders in 2014 were awarded for road projects and included: Parts 1 and 2 of the Adam-Thumrait dual carriageway (RO201 million); Stage 2 of the Bidbid-Sur dual carriageway (RO189.8 million); Package 2 of the South Batinah Expressway (RO142.4 million); the Barka-Nakhl



Oman's economic policies have won it plaudits from around the world and it receives high rankings in international economic reports.





dual carriageway (RO64.9 million); Stage 2 of the the Ibri-Yanqul dual carriageway (RO42.1 million); improvements to the Khasab-Teebat coast road (RO41.9 million); and the Taqah-Mirbat dual carriageway (RO40.4 million).

Tenders awarded in 2014 also included an infrastructure project for the Sumail Industrial Estate in the Dakhiliyah Governorate (RO39.5 million).

The majority of tenders (66 - at a cost of RO 210.1 million) were in the public services and utilities sector, followed by roads (28 – at a cost of RO 953.6 million), health (22 – costing RO 56 million), water and sewerage (4 – at a cost of RO43.7 million), education and training (2 – at a cost of RO6.4 million), and electricity (2 – costing RO4.2 million).

During the first half of 2015 the Board awarded tenders with a value of RO382.7 million, compared with a figure of RO616.3 million over the same period in 2014. They included several projects of major importance, particularly in the roads, electricity, water, health and housing sectors.

The Tender Board, established in 1973, is responsible for inviting tenders, opening and analysing bids and awarding all government tenders costing over RO 3 million.

Road projects were top of the list of tenders assigned during 2014.



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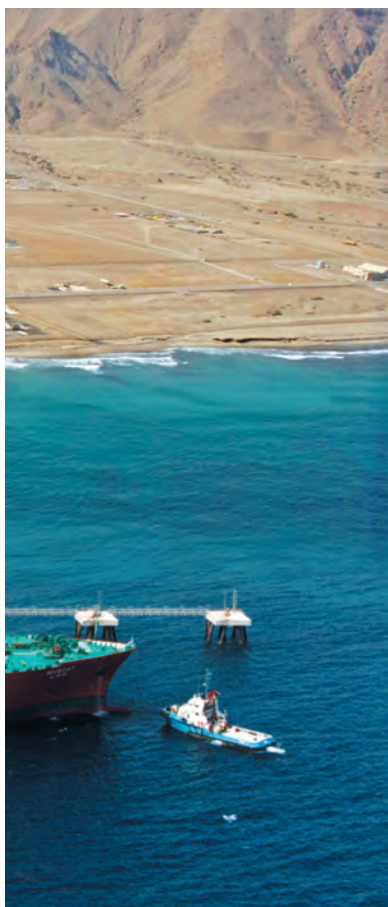
An estimated 9.16 billion RO in revenue is anticipated for the oil and gas sectors in the 2015 budget.

Oil and natural gas resources

In the 2015 Budget oil and gas revenues were estimated at RO9.16 billion, including RO 7.7 billion in net oil revenues. Oil and gas account for around 78.9 per cent of overall government revenues, which total RO11.6 billion.

In 2014 the average price of Omani crude fell to US\$103 per barrel as a result of the drop in oil prices in the world markets (down from US\$105 in 2013), with prices ranging from US\$108.08 per barrel in August of that year down to US\$86.96 per barrel in December.

The year 2014 was a good year for production and exploration. Production and exploration companies in the oil sector drilled 49 exploratory wells, while their counterparts in the gas sector drilled 18 exploratory wells. At the end of 2014 19 companies were exploring and producing oil and gas in 29 concession areas.



Production of crude and oil condensates averaged around 943,000 barrels per day (bpd), compared with some 942,000 bpd in 2013, while the volume of oil and oil condensate exports fell by 3.9 per cent – from 304 million barrels in 2013 to 292 million in 2014. China, the main importer of Omani crude, purchased 72 per cent of the Sultanate’s oil exports, followed by Taiwan at 11 per cent and Thailand at 5.2 per cent.

At the end of 2014 the Sultanate had an estimated total of around 5.3 billion barrels of oil and oil condensate reserves.

Estimated natural gas reserves at the end of 2014 stood at around 24.3 trillion cubic feet (tcf) which is equivalent to 688.1 billion cubic metres (bcm). Average daily production was 97.8 million cubic metres, comprising around 18.6 million cubic metres (mcm) of associated gas and some 79.2 million cubic metres of non-associated gas. During that year some 5.4 million cubic metres per day of natural gas were imported from Dolphin Energy.

In 2014 Oman exported around 7.9 million metric tonnes of liquefied natural gas.

During the first half of 2015 Oman’s oil production rose to 175 million barrels, up from 170.8 million barrels over the same period in 2014. Daily production averaged 970,000 barrels compared with 943,000 barrels during the same period in 2014. Oil exports rose to 154.8 million barrels, up from 143.8 million barrels during the first half of 2014.

The Sultanate has two crude oil refineries. The Mina al Fahal Refinery, which began operations in 1982, produced around 36 million barrels in 2014, while the Sohar Refinery, opened in April 2007, produced some 45.7 million barrels.

The banking sector

Oman has an efficient, stable, flexible banking sector capable of adapting to changing circumstances while taking effective steps to achieve its



The year 2014 was a good year for production and exploration. Production and exploration companies in the oil sector drilled 49 exploratory wells.



objectives. As the country's monetary authority, the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) – established in 1974 - provides a positive climate for financing in general, but particularly for the banking sector, so that it can play its vital part in promoting economic growth and diversifying the sources of that growth. The CBO is also responsible for maintaining the purchasing power of the national currency – the Omani Rial – at home and abroad.

The CBO has a capital base of RO 700 million and at the end of 2014 its assets/liabilities totalled around RO 6.6 billion (around US\$ 17.2 billion). It has two branches – one in Salalah and the other in Sohar.

Over the course of 2014 the Bank continued to upgrade its regulatory and monitoring frameworks in order to boost confidence in the banking sector and encourage national savings so that they could be used to meet the funding needs of companies and individuals. Among the measures adopted in this connection were instructions to the commercial banks to avoid conflicts of interest when appointing candidates for future positions, whether to executive posts or as members of their boards of directors. The CBO also issued precautionary regulations on disclosure of the credit status of non-residents and funds deposited abroad, with the aim of keeping risks to a specified level and handling them in a manner that would help reinforce the position of the banking institutions, strengthen the financial system and facilitate financial transactions, while enabling the commercial banks to make profits abroad within a framework of economic freedom and globalisation.

The Joint Committee for Financial Stability was established in 2014 following a decision by the CBO's board of governors. The Committee, whose members are drawn from several government departments, is responsible for studying the systemic risks faced by the banking sector and the capital market, and for proposing ways of reinforcing the Sultanate's financial stability through effective risk and financial crisis management and precautionary monitoring. The formation of the Committee is the latest step towards safeguarding the country's financial stability by adopting measures such as an effective monitoring system and sound analysis of systemic risks.

The Committee produces an annual report on the stability of the Sultanate's financial situation as well as quarterly stress test reports.

To encourage loans for productive projects and reduce the level of personal loans, in 2014 the CBO amended the regulations on personal loans, setting the ceiling for personal loan portfolios at a maximum of 35 per cent of a bank's overall loans portfolio and housing loans at a maximum of 15 per cent. At the same time, to relieve the burden on borrowers, the interest rate ceiling for personal loans (including housing loans) was lowered to 6 per cent.



The Joint Committee for Financial Stability was established in 2014 following a decision by the CBO's board of governors. The Committee's members are drawn from several government departments.



The commercial banks

The Sultanate's 16 licensed commercial banks (comprising seven national banks and nine branches of foreign banks) handle their banking and investment operations through 514 branches in different parts of the country. At the end of 2014 some 92.4 per cent of the personnel working in the banking sector were Omanis.

Of the commercial banks operating in the Sultanate, eleven have been licensed to operate as investment banks and have been granted licenses by the CBO to provide financing for companies and projects, as well as investment management consultancy services and custody, safekeeping and guarantee facilities to cover exports.

Assets held by the commercial banks rose by 11.1 per cent in 2014 to RO 24.8 billion, while overall credit and deposits grew by 11.3 per cent and 10.9 per cent respectively. Credit – totalling around RO 16.9 billion - represented some 68 per cent of the total assets. Throughout the year the commercial banks continued to perform solidly and their credit portfolio maintained its quality. At the end of December 2014 the ratio of non-performing loans (2.1 per cent) remained unchanged from its level at the end of December 2013.

Positive growth rates were achieved by the Sultanate's banking sector.



The commercial banks showed growth in all their indicators during the first five months of 2015, with their assets rising to RO 27.1 billion by the end of May. Overall credit totalled RO 17.5 billion and deposits RO 18.6 billion.

Islamic banking

There are two banks in the Sultanate specialised in providing finance in accordance with the Islamic Sharia, as well as six Islamic outlets at the commercial banks. The Islamic banking sector expanded significantly in 2014 and set up a number of new branches, bringing the total to 46. This was reflected in a rise in the assets of the Islamic banking units to some 5.3 per cent of the total assets of the banking institutions that are licensed to accept deposits (i.e. the conventional banks in addition to the Islamic banks and outlets). Overall finance advanced by the Islamic banks and outlets rose from around RO 434 million at the end of 2013 to RO 1,050 million by the end of 2014. With respect to their sources of funding, they increased their deposits from some RO 172 million at the end of 2013 to around RO 689 million, while their basic and reserve capital rose from RO 328 million to RO 351 million.

Finance and exchange companies

There are six companies in Oman licensed by the Central Bank of Oman to provide non-banking financial services. Regarded as an integral part of the banking sector, these companies operate in fields such as consumer financing, sales, hire purchase and debt collecting.

There are two types of licensed exchange companies in the Sultanate. They include 16 companies which buy and sell foreign currencies, deal in precious metals and issue financial drafts, and 31 companies which are only permitted to buy and sell foreign currencies.

Specialised banks

From an early stage the Sultanate recognized that there was a need for specialised banks to provide the funding needed by those sectors that have a vital role to play in the country's economic growth. Subsequently the Oman Housing Bank (OHB) and Oman Development Bank (ODB) were established for that purpose and receive strong government support.

The OHB, set up in 1977, provides citizens with loans of up to RO 60,000 on easy terms to fund the purchase, construction or completion of



There are two banks in the Sultanate specialised in providing finance in accordance with the Islamic Sharia, as well as six Islamic outlets at the commercial banks.



a dwelling. In 2015 it increased its capital to RO 100 million to boost its financial resources and enable it to implement its lending plans and achieve its other aims, such as supporting Oman's construction industry. From the time it was set up till May 2015 the OHB made over 38,000 homes available in various parts of the country with an estimated value of around RO 815 million. In 2015 the Bank was awarded a prize as the best bank in the Arab world in providing real estate funding.

The ODB, established in 1997, represents a new departure in the policy of advancing loans to back private sector projects, particularly small and medium enterprises (SMEs). With its ceiling of RO 1 million per individual loan, it provides SMEs with loans on easy terms at a maximum rate of interest of 3 per cent, as well as interest-free loans of up to RO 5,000 for small investors and craftspeople

The capital market

Muscat Securities Market (MSM) is part of the capital market sector overseen by the Capital Market Authority (CMA). Established in 1988 under Royal Decree No. 53/88, issued on 21st June 1988, it was restructured in 1998 and three separate bodies were set up: the CMA, MSM and Muscat Depository and Securities Registration Company (MDSRC), later renamed Muscat Clearing and Depository Company (MCDC) under Royal Decree No. 72/2010, issued on 26th May 2010.

The CMA regulates, licenses and monitors the issue and trading of securities within Oman and oversees MSM, along with all its traders and listed companies. MSM records and trades in securities and acts as a bourse, while, in addition to holding shareholders' registers, MCDC also deposits, registers and holds the sale and purchase contracts for securities and proof of ownership transfers, and issues statements on them to shareholders. It is electronically linked to MSM.

The Capital Market Authority (CMA)

The Capital Market Authority (CMA) is responsible for overseeing the capital market and insurance sectors. Established under Royal Decree No. 80/98, issued on 9th November 1998, it began operating on 9th January 1999. It is a financially and administratively independent legal entity.

In 2014 the Capital Market Law was amended under Royal Decree No. 59/2014. The amendments provided for the incorporation of long-term Islamic funding products following the granting of permission for Islamic



Muscat Securities Market (MSM) is part of the capital market sector overseen by the Capital Market Authority (CMA). Established in 1988.



banking activity and its associated investment instruments. The Decree also laid down new regulations for purchases and acquisitions, as well as measures for bolstering compliance with the laws and statutes regulating the capital market sector, including increases in some of the penalties for infringements by companies and other parties.

In 2014 the capital market sector provided RO 907 million in funding for companies through the issue of new shares or bonds.

Muscat Securities Market (MSM)

The sharp drop in prices in the world oil market and a succession of political and economic crises had a significant impact upon Muscat Securities Market (MSM)'s performance in 2014 and 2015. In 2014 MSM's main index fell by 7.1 per cent, closing at 6,343 points – down 491 points compared with the figure for the end of 2013. However, in the first half of 2015 it showed a rise of 81 points when it closed at 6,424 points.

At the end of December 2014 the market value of companies listed on MSM recorded a rise of RO 402 million to RO 14.557 billion from its level at the end of 2013. By the end of June 2015 it had climbed to RO 15.027 billion – a rise of RO 463 million compared with the end of 2014.

The trading floor of the Muscat Securities Market.



The total turnover of trading shares and bonds increased to RO2.27 billion during 2014, up from RO2.281 billion in 2013. Market capitalisation increased by 2.9% to reach RO14.56 billion in 2014 compared to RO14.16 billion in 2013. However, the turnover slumped by 85% to RO707.3 million, down from around RO 1.3 billion during the first half of 2014.

Companies whose shares were listed for the first time on MSM in 2014 included al Batinah Energy and al Sawadi Energy, as well as al Maha Ceramics, which received an enthusiastic response from investors when it floated some of its shares. The shares of Phoenix Power Company were listed during the first half of 2015 when it offered 35 per cent of its capital for public subscription.

The insurance sector

Insurance is a high priority sector in Oman in view of the benefits it yields for individuals, society and the national economy in general. Amending some of the provisions of the Insurance Companies Law, Royal Decree No. 39/2014, issued in 2014, stipulated that insurance companies should adopt the legal status of public joint stock companies and that they should have a minimum paid-up capital base of RO10 million. The Decree granted existing companies a notice period of three years from the time of its coming into force, to enable them to bring their situations into line with the new provisions (i.e. with regard to their legal status and paid-up capital).

At the end of 2014 there were some 22 national and foreign companies operating in the insurance sector, as well as one reinsurance company, while two companies were operating in the mutual insurance field in conjunction with national companies. There were around 36 insurance brokers.

Trade

Oman's economic strategy is driven by a policy of openness to the world markets. The Sultanate is a member of the World Trade Organisation and a signatory to several regional and international agreements, including agreements within the framework of the Gulf Co-operation Council and the Arab states.

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry is responsible for regulating domestic trade, facilitating import and export procedures and creating a suitable environment for the private sector to contribute to Oman's economic growth. It also endeavours to develop trade with the outside world and encourage investment in a range of economic sectors.

Domestic trade expanded significantly in 2014. This was due to several



In 2014 the capital market sector provided RO 907 million in funding for companies through the issue of new shares or bonds.



In 2014 every effort was made to guarantee the availability of good, basic foodstuffs of strategic importance at all times through the purchase of a range of staples compatible with international specifications.

The Public Authority for Consumer Protection operates continuous inspection tours of retail units to deter counterfeiting and fraud.

factors including higher government spending and a rise in job opportunities for nationals. At current prices, wholesale and retail trade contributed RO 2.083 billion to the country's GDP, up from RO 2.042 billion in 2013. Loans to that sector totalled around RO 639.7 million at the end of 2014, accounting for some 3.8 per cent of the total volume of credit (RO 16.9 billion) granted by the commercial banks over the course of the year. By the end of the first quarter of 2015 credit advanced to the wholesale and retail sector had risen to RO 663.8 million.

The Sultanate's trade with the outside world totalled around RO 31.7 billion in 2014, comprising commodity exports (RO 20.4 billion) and commodity imports (RO 11.3 billion). Oil and gas exports accounted for some RO 13.4 billion (65.6 per cent) of overall commodity exports, with non-oil exports totalling RO 4.1 billion and re-exports RO 2.9 billion.

Food security

As part of its remit for safeguarding food security, the Public Authority for Stores and Food Reserves (PASFR) sets up and manages storage facilities and related operations; this entails storing staple foodstuffs in safe and secure conditions and ensuring that they are kept fresh and fit for human



consumption. In 2014 every effort was made to guarantee the availability of good, basic foodstuffs of strategic importance at all times through the purchase of a range of staples compatible with international specifications, including new types of high quality rice. Work also began on a programme to expand the PASFR's storage capacity at its directorate in the North Batinah Governorate and sites have been identified for the construction of wheat silos in Sohar and Salalah.

The PASFR and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) are working together to upgrade the Sultanate's food security data systems, research programmes and policies. The PASFR's Food Security Department is currently preparing a wide-ranging economic report on staple food prices and reserves around the world based on daily information and analysis taken from the reports issued by international organisations such as the FAO, the International Sugar Organisation and the International Grains Council.

Industry

After the oil sector, industry is one of the Sultanate's main engines of economic and social development. It is one of the most effective ways of achieving economic diversification and encouraging private sector investment, while attracting foreign capital, creating job opportunities for Omani nationals and helping to meet a significant part of the local community's need for goods and commodities.

Over recent years the Sultanate has been offering incentives and facilities to encourage the development of heavy and petrochemicals industries alongside its light and medium industries. Consequently, industry's contribution to the country's GDP has grown steadily, rising by 3.8 per cent in 2014 to RO5.7 billion, or 18.1 per cent of the Sultanate's overall GDP of RO31.4 billion. There has also been an increase in the volume of credit advanced to the industrial sector. By the end of 2014 it had risen to RO1.4 billion - around RO203 million higher than the figure at the end of 2013.

The Sultanate has eight industrial estates dedicated primarily to small and medium industries. They are overseen by the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (PEIE) – a body which was granted addition powers and prerogatives under Royal Decree No. 32/2015 on the Promulgation of the PEIE's Regulations, issued on 21st July 2015. To enable the PEIE to attract investments, the Decree grants its board of directors the right to exempt some of the industrial estates under its jurisdiction – or some of their investment activities – from some or all of the provisions of the Foreign Capital Investment Law and the Commercial Companies Law, as well as from the Omanisation levels prescribed under the rules in force; according



After the oil sector, industry is one of the Sultanate's main engines of economic and social development. It is one of the most effective ways of achieving economic diversification.





SEZAD offers a range of facilities and incentives for investors including exemption from taxes for up to 30 solar years from the date of starting business.



to the Decree such exemptions will be determined by a decision from the Council of Ministers and on the recommendation of the PEIE's board of directors.

By the end of 2014 investment in these industrial estates had risen to around RO5 billion, compared with RO4.4 billion in 2013, while the number of industrial projects had grown to 1,470, up from 1,409 in 2013. By the end of 2014 the industrial estates were providing employment for over 36,000 people.

In a move designed to capitalise on Oman's geographical location, economic and free zones have been set up in various parts of the country to attract investment, particularly in the ports and heavy and petrochemical



industries sectors. The Duqm Special Economic Zone (SEZAD) – one of the leading zones - comprises the Port of al Duqm, a ship repair dry dock and an industrial complex, in addition to tourist, commercial and logistical areas; there are also plans to establish a number of major industrial enterprises in the area and attract around US\$ 15 billion in investments. The SEZAD has been designed with a view to its future expansion and to provide up to 20,000 direct and indirect job opportunities for nationals by 2020. Work on developing the area began in 2007 with the Port of al Duqm project and the Zone's administration aims to make it a commercial, industrial and tourist hub of global importance.

The Zone offers a range of facilities and incentives for investors including exemption from taxes for up to 30 solar years from the date of

The manufacturing sector is a key driver of Oman's economic and social development.

starting business; this exemption will be renewable for similar periods. Investment in the Zone will be subject to the usufruct system; the usufruct right may continue for 50 years and be renewable for similar periods.

Regulated by the Free Zones Law promulgated under Royal Decree No. 56/2002 in 2002, the free zones offer a package of investment incentives and facilities including tax exemptions, simplified procedures for obtaining licences and permits and the import of permitted goods, exemption from minimum investment levels, the free use of currencies, income tax exemption on profits and other features.

To date three free zones have been set up in the Sultanate. The first - Al Mazyounah Free Zone - became operational in November 1999 and is in the Governorate of Dhofar near the Omani-Yemeni border. The second - Salalah Free Zone - was established in 2006 and is managed and operated by the Salalah Free Zone Company, while the third - the Sohar Free Zone - was set up under Royal Decree No. 123/2010, issued on 20th December 2010, and is managed by the Sohar Free Zone Company.

In a reflection of the government's industrial strategy, the HM the Sultan's Cup Competition for the best five factories is an annual event that has been held since 1991 to encourage Omani factories to keep pace with the latest technological developments, comply with standard specifications and increase the percentage of Omanis in their work force.

"Omani" is an annual campaign to promote Omani products. Working in collaboration with the Public Authority for Investment Promotion and Export Development (PAIPED), the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) and a number of Omani companies, the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (PEIE) broadened the scope of the campaign in 2012 to cover several Gulf Co-operation Council states.

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs)

Ever since the birth of its modern Renaissance the Sultanate has attached great importance to the small and medium enterprise (SME) sector, and in 2013 its efforts culminated in the establishment of the Public Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises (PASME) under Royal Decree No. 36/2013, issued on 30th May of that year. The Authority's brief is to develop and improve small and medium enterprises, plan and promote their expansion and enable them to obtain the funding and services they need in co-ordination with the relevant government and private bodies.

The PASME seeks to foster a business enterprise spirit among young people. To this end it aims to enable SMEs to play their part in creating jobs and helps young entrepreneurs - both male and female - to set up,



Several programmes were introduced in 2014 and 2015 to encourage entrepreneurs to set up and operate their own projects.



manage and develop their own projects, while providing existing businesses with the means to improve their competitiveness, contribute added value to the national economy, help promote economic diversification and support innovation and the introduction of modern technology.

Several programmes were introduced in 2014 and 2015 to encourage entrepreneurs to set up and operate their own projects. The Oman Development Bank (ODB) signed SME loan guarantee agreements with five commercial banks, entitling banks that provide funding for SME projects to obtain government guarantees through the ODB and enabling aspiring entrepreneurs to receive up to a maximum of RO 250,000 in funding from the commercial banks. The ODB offers guarantees covering 50 per cent of the facilities provided by the commercial banks for those enterprises.

The programme is aimed at new investors who have practicable ideas on investment in productive or service projects, while lacking sufficient resources or guarantees of their own.

Another successful initiative is the *Tawjih* ("Inspiration and Success") Programme, which is seen as an effective channel for transferring acquired knowledge from established businessmen to new entrepreneurs, while developing the latter's skills and showing them how to recognize the challenges their projects may have to tackle.

In 2014 the *Rafd* Fund began granting loans for SMEs through four funding programmes that took into account the needs and aspirations of the country's youth. The *Mawrid* programme finances loans up to a maximum limit of RO 10,000 for social security beneficiaries, without charges for administrative or technical services. The *Ta'sees* programme targets jobseekers, including those wishing to set up new projects, by providing them with loans of up to RO 20,000 without requiring them to contribute any of their own money to the projects. *Riyadah* offers a loan ceiling of up to RO 100,000 for the different categories covered by the Fund including new entrepreneurs, while the *Ta'zeez* programme provides loans of up to RO 100,000 for former recipients of loans from the Fund who are seeking additional support and wish to expand their existing projects.

In 2014 the ODB provided 1,023 loans for *Rafd* Fund schemes with a total value of around RO 34.6 million. The loans were reinforced by a package of facilities and easy and flexible conditions which were devised after a careful study of international funding criteria. Charges for administrative and technical services are held to a maximum of 2 per cent in all circumstances, though recipients of social security benefits are exempt. According to an agreement with the Oman Development Bank, which manages the Fund's portfolio, the Bank will pay out the loans to beneficiaries within 48 hours of



In 2014 the Rafd Fund began granting loans for SMEs through four funding programmes that took into account the needs and aspirations of the country's youth.



the initial approval being granted, with a maximum limit of 72 hours.

The National Business Centre, established by the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates in 2013, is a major incubator for SMEs and provides technical, administrative, logistical, mentoring and advisory assistance for new projects and support for creative thinking on prospective enterprises likely to generate economic benefits and added value. During 2014 its incubated schemes produced financial returns estimated at RO 950,000.

Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI)

Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) was set up in 1973 as a public utility institution to look after the interests of the private sector and represent it at regional and international forums. Over the past few years its performance and powers have increased significantly, as has the number of its members. It has also come to provide an effective forum for the private sector to discuss matters of economic interest and demonstrate how it can contribute more effectively to the country's development.

The Chamber's membership currently stands at around 240,000 companies of various categories and grades, including local businesses, consultancy firms and multinationals attracted by the Sultanate's investment climate. The services it provides for its members enable them to benefit more profitably from the country's increasingly active economic scene.

In 2014 the Chamber introduced several initiatives to boost the business community's contribution to the Sultanate's development and raise the private sector's profile by providing it with effective support and helping establish the right environment for it to grow, generate incomes and create employment opportunities for Omani nationals. One of these initiatives was the Corporate Social Responsibility Award – a prize designed to highlight the role played by companies and corporations in that particular field. The OCCI also organised the Business Opportunities Forum, at which major companies showcased contracts, tenders and projects with a total value of RO16.9 billion. Contracts and tenders were also signed at the Forum to the tune of around RO44 million.

In 2014 the OCCI held a symposium on the "Blue Economy" in collaboration with the European Union, with the aim of exploring opportunities in the marine, shipping and logistical fields and seeking ways of benefiting from new research and developments in the international arena in the interests of investment, tourism, environmental protection and marine conservation and transport.

The Chamber also sent trade delegations to various countries around the



The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry's membership currently stands at around 240,000 companies of various categories and grades, including local businesses, consultancy firms and multinationals attracted by the Sultanate's investment climate.



world to promote co-operation between Omani companies and their foreign counterparts. “*Manafidh*” – an OCCI initiative involving major companies and commercial establishments – is designed to support small and medium enterprises (SMEs)

by creating sales outlets for them free of charge through a combination of promotion and marketing and by raising awareness among SME proprietors about the importance of familiarising consumers with their products and services.

Information technology (IT)

The Information Technology Authority (ITA) is the body responsible for implementing the national digital Oman and e-government strategy, which aims to transform the Sultanate into a knowledge-based economy through a raft of initiatives and projects.

The ITA has introduced a series of measures designed to improve e-government services. The “National Disaster Recovery Centre” has been set up to retrieve “lost” data when necessary, ensure the continuity of the Sultanate’s information technology (IT) systems and minimise the impact of disasters. Work has also begun on the establishment of the “G-Cloud” government cloud project to meet the needs of the different government departments for a shared IT infrastructure.

The ITA has issued more than 2 million signing certificates and 2 million authentication certificates in the e-ID cards for Omanis and residents. It added 85 new government locations to the government e-network, taking the total number of connected locations to 914 sites. Security was managed for a total of 453 websites, while over 731,000 transactions were processed via the e-payment portal.

Major current nation-wide ITA projects include a programme in which 84 government departments and bodies are actively involved in the implementation of the e-government transformation plan. The aim here is to achieve the objectives of the second stage of the digital Oman plan, including the expansion, integration and improvement of e-government services, while encouraging citizens, residents and commercial establishments to make greater use of those services.

The ITA also seeks to help companies to improve their IT products and market them at home and abroad. This will have a positive impact on the domestic market and help promote the Omani economy’s drive towards fully comprehensive, sustainable technology, which in turn will strengthen Oman’s international position in this field. Initiatives introduced



Major current nation-wide ITA projects include a programme in which 84 government departments and bodies are actively involved in the implementation of the e-government transformation plan.



Oman is currently engaged on a number of agriculture, livestock and fisheries development programmes. These sectors play an important part in the lives of a large section of the community and represent a source of income for many of the country's citizens.

The Sultanate is actively pursuing development of the agriculture sector under its strategy to achieve food security.

by the Authority in this connection include: the Sas business pioneering programme; the national open-source programming support initiative; and the Mobile Applications Development Centre, which aims to offer a number of services to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), job-seekers, freelancers and firms in various business incubators. It will also act as an IT-enabled platform for researchers and government agencies.

Agriculture and fisheries

Oman is currently engaged on a number of agriculture, livestock and fisheries development programmes. These sectors play an important part in the lives of a large section of the community and represent a source of income for many of the country's citizens. Upgrading them will also help the Sultanate achieve its food security targets.

In 2014 the agriculture and fisheries sectors contributed around RO406.1 million to Oman's GDP – a rise of 9.4 per cent compared with the 2013 figure of RO371.2 million.

Through its modernisation programmes the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries aims to streamline Oman's traditional farming and fishing methods and introduce new technology that will be more in tune with the country's



economic and social development plans. The Ministry aims to ensure that both these sectors are managed in a way that will guarantee the best use, and sustainability, of the Sultanate's available natural resources.

The total production of agriculture stood at 1,515,000 tonnes in 2014 compared to 1,484,000 tonnes in 2013, a growth of 2% due to increased productivity from vegetable cultivated areas from 313,000 tonnes in 2013 to 335,000 tonnes in 2014, a growth of 7% per year due to the introduction of modern technology.

The 2013-2014 agricultural census revealed that the total number of plots under cultivation had increased to 355,000 *feddans* (1 *feddan* = 1.038 acres) – a rise of nine per cent from the 324,000 *feddans* recorded in the previous census carried out in 2004-2005. Over the same period, the number of Omani farmers from landholding families grew to 237,000 – up from 154,000 – while the number of full-time Omani farmers who were not members of landholding families rose to 18,522, compared with 15,213 in the previous census.

There are around 7.5 million date palms in the Sultanate, as well as 390,000 lime trees, 434,000 mango trees and 159,000 coconut palms.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries is currently preparing a sustainable development strategy for the agricultural sector up to the year 2040, in collaboration with the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). The aim is to achieve food security in its broadest sense, reduce fruit and vegetable imports and encourage citizens to work in the sector, improve its productivity and boost its economic returns.

Some 211,000 tonnes of fish were landed in 2014, up from 206,000 tonnes in 2013, though there was a slight fall (0.2 per cent) in the value of the catches to around RO166 million. Traditional fishing accounted for 98.3 per cent of overall production, due largely to Oman's decision to ban bottom trawlers – a practice which has a negative effect on fish stocks and the environment.

Several schemes currently in operation are aimed at boosting the output of the fisheries sector and increasing its value. Significant attention is being given to the aquaculture industry and a programme was introduced in 2014 to subsidise the Sultanate's traditional fishermen, following which 736 fishermen across the country received government support. Improvement work was carried out on a number of fish markets as well as the country's 19 fishing harbours.

The fishing industry employs around 48,000 people, including 42,552 traditional fishermen, 2,746 fish transporters and 2,525 people employed



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Fishing is a major contributor to and renewable resource of the national economy.

in fisheries-related establishments. Over 95 per cent of them are Omanis. The sector is expected to employ increasing numbers of nationals as new projects get off the ground, particularly in aquaculture.

The Sultanate's livestock projects are designed to achieve self-sufficiency in animal products and improve the level of food security. Projects in this sector include schemes to help small producers increase their contribution to the rural economy, such as livestock advice programmes aimed at raising awareness among stockbreeders about the importance of using modern technology in the production, processing and marketing of meat products and the management and health care of livestock.

The 2013-2014 agricultural census showed varying rates of increase in the country's animal resources compared with the previous census in 2004-2005. The number of goats grew by 34 per cent from 1.5 million to around 2.1 million, sheep by 56 per cent to 548,000, cattle from 301,000 to 359,000 and camels by 107 per cent to 242,000.

The livestock sector's output increased from 184,900 tonnes in 2013 to 207,200 tonnes in 2014. Of this figure, fresh milk accounted for 48 per cent, poultry 22.6 per cent, red meat 22.3 per cent and eggs 7.1 per cent.





Tourism

The 2015-2040 tourism strategy seeks to increase the tourist sector's contribution to Oman's GDP and the Ministry of Tourism aims to exploit the country's numerous tourist attractions, including its stunning natural beauty, varied terrain and rich cultural heritage and history.

The new strategy aims to make tourism a prime source of employment and national income, while its focus will be on a range of new tourist products that will enable the Sultanate to generate economic benefits and compete effectively in the world market as a major tourist destination.

The tourism strategy is reinforced by several of the country's current projects, such as the new Muscat International Airport, Salalah Airport, the regional airports in Sohar, Duqm and Ras al Hadd, and a number of new hotels and resorts which are at present under construction. "Conference tourism" is also expected to be a significant contributor in future and in this connection the new Convention and Exhibition Centre is expected to open in 2016.

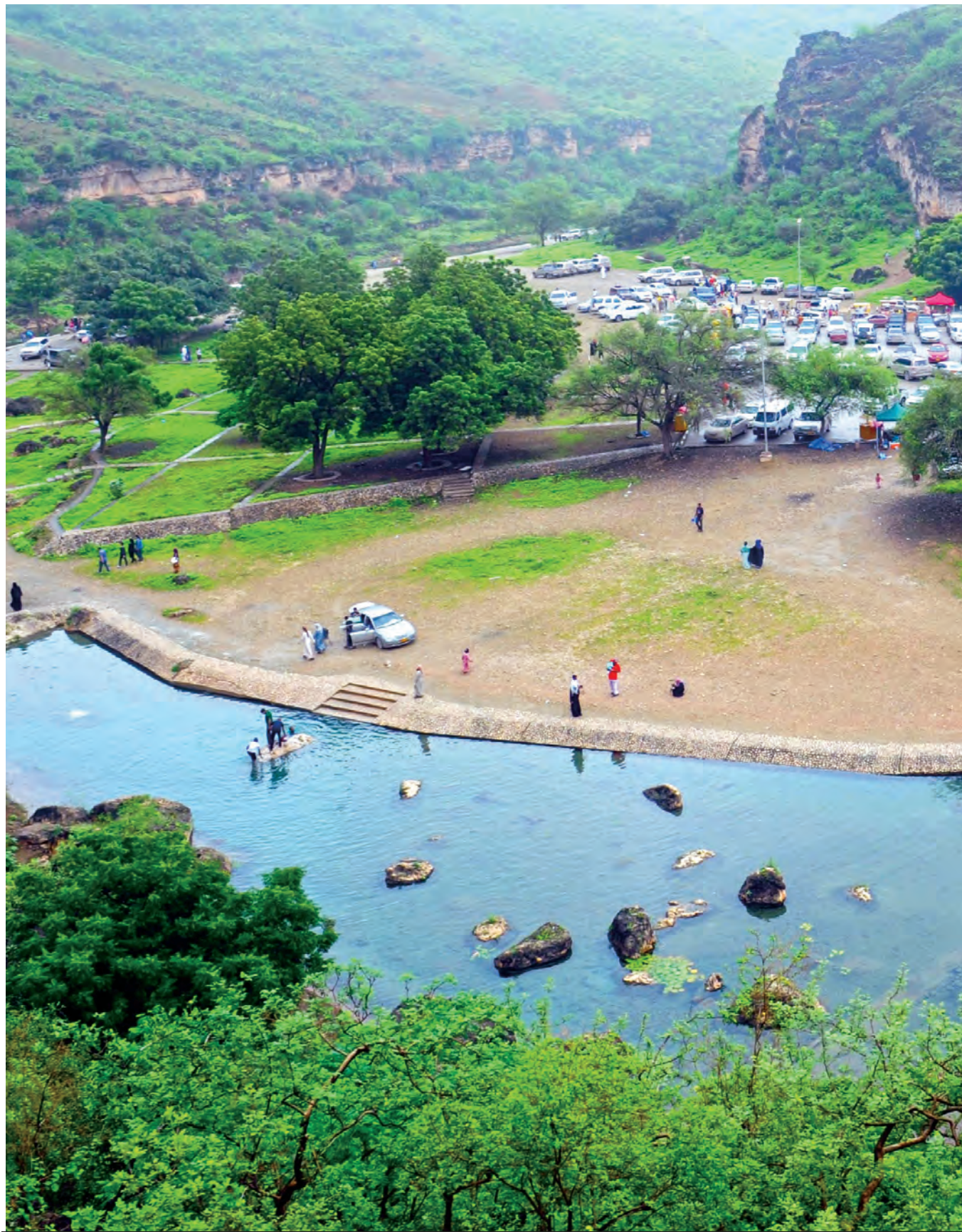
In 2014 the Sultanate received 2.2 million tourists – up from 2.1 million the previous year – and the hotel sector recorded a rise in its revenues and occupancy rates. The average occupancy rate for three, four and five-star hotels was around 60.4 per cent and, with a total of around 1.2 million guests, revenues topped some RO191.5 million.

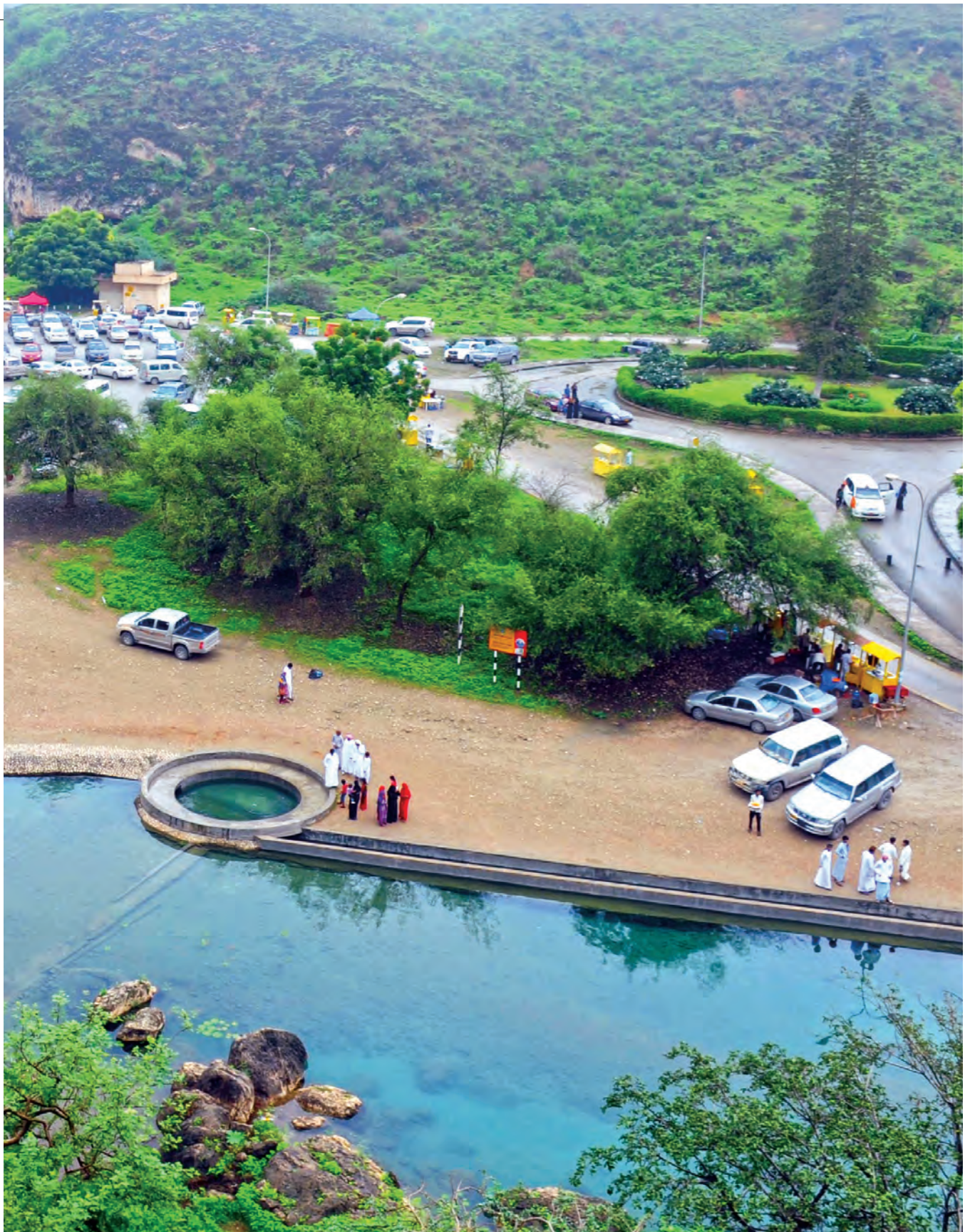
Modern hotels and resorts add substance and value to the efforts of the tourism sector.



**The new 2015-2040
Tourism strategy aims
to make tourism a prime
source of employment and
national income.**







The Sultanate's enormous unexploited potential makes tourism an attractive and exciting resource (Ain Razat in Salalah).



The Muscat Festival (held in January) is an opportunity to showcase the best the Sultanate has to offer, in tourist sites, heritage and traditional arts.

Muscat Festival

First held in February 1998, Muscat Festival aims to promote Omani tourism and culture, and over the years it has established itself as one of the leading festivals in the Gulf and the Arab world.

The 2015 Muscat Festival sought to highlight Oman's many tourist attractions, as well as its culture and history. Its slogan - "Oman Fascinates" - was adopted as a reflection of the country's ability to delight



and charm, highlighting its international status and those characteristically Omani features which have particular appeal for tourists, such as the Sultanate's widely varied terrain and environment and its harmonious blend of tradition, culture and modernity.

The Festival was held in several locations in the Governorate of Muscat, including Naseem Park, al Amerat Park and Seeb Beach. It included several new events and programmes such as exhibitions on specialist themes, a snow village, an interactive village, a Jurassic park and a festival of maritime crafts, as well as more established favourites like the Heritage Village with its depictions of traditional marine, rural and agricultural life, the international arts and crafts

exhibition, shopping facilities, performances by international artistes, carnival and circus performers, a funfair with electronic games, the Tour of Oman bicycle race, Muscat Fashion Week and the Oman Food Festival.

The 15th Muscat Festival – held from 15th January to 14th February 2015 – attracted around a million visitors.



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The Salalah Tourist Festival

Held in the Governorate of Dhofar during the summer, the Salalah Tourist Festival has established itself as one of the region's more high profile festivals. With visitors from the Sultanate, the Gulf Co-operation Council states and beyond, it is a major economic and tourist event designed to further enhance the joys of a holiday in Dhofar during that region's unique annual *Khareef* season which lasts from 21st June to 21st September - a time when a gentle drizzle ensures that the temperature never rises above around 25 degrees C.

The 2015 Salalah Tourist Festival, held from 23rd July to 31st August, had a wide range of attractions on offer. Its slogan - "Oman: Love and Peace" - was adopted as an expression of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said's vision of building bridges of friendship and harmony with all the peoples of the world.

In response to the growing numbers of people visiting the Governorate of Dhofar over the summer period, Dhofar Municipality is currently engaged on a number of projects to improve road communication links in the region for the benefit of visitors. Modern roads, bridges and flyovers have been built and lighting has been installed along several of the main highways. Work is also in progress on the construction of a water garden



Held in the Governorate of Dhofar during the summer, the Salalah Tourist Festival has established itself as one of the region's more high profile festivals.





at the Municipality's recreation centre, where most of the Salalah Tourist Festival events are held. It is estimated that the project will cost around RO6 million.

Over the three months of the 2014 *Khareef* season from 21st June to 21st September, over 431,000 visitors from the Sultanate, the Gulf Co-operation Council states and beyond visited the Governorate of Dhofar to enjoy its distinctive and delightful summer climate.

Salalah Tourism Festival, which is held during the monsoon, is a colourful blend of heritage and modernity.



Modern Facilities and the Environment



Modern Facilities and the Environment

The Sultanate seeks to espouse sound principles of environmental management and conservation in accordance with one of the fundamental principles of Oman's modern Renaissance.

In order to afford the necessary protection and preservation of the environment the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs has expanded and intensified monitoring systems as a result of the accelerating pace of infrastructural and industrial development, bearing in mind the potential adverse impacts on the ecosphere of large-scale development projects in the transport, tourism and commercial sectors. The Ministry also cooperates closely with international organizations, drawing upon their expertise to update and refine environmental protection strategies. In particular, the Ministry works in tandem with the United Nations Framework Agreement on Climate Change and the United Nations Organisation for Industrial Development (UNIDO) in the implementation of studies and initiatives in the field of climate change, with particular regard to the depletion of the ozone layer, renewable energy and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs has signed a number of agreements in the areas of environment, nature conservation and biodiversity. A significant initiative in this connection is the monitoring of air and noise pollution in Muscat through the establishment of two facilities to measure vehicle emissions and noise levels, as well as a mobile unit for checking air quality in the most congested areas of the city.

The Sultanate also attaches importance to protecting the environment and the population from the dangers of radiation and in 2015 the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs set up an early monitoring system to monitor radiation levels. The system consists of 8 regional field stations with more to be set up in the near future.

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs follows up and implements laws and regulations on environmental matters in accordance with a national plan for sustainable development in line with international agreements. It has also prepared a new national strategy for the control and disposal of industrial chemical products.

Oman Environment Day, which is marked on 8 January every year, affirms the Sultanate's commitment to preserving the environment. In 2015, to emphasize the role of the community in this regard it was celebrated under the slogan of "Our environment, our future".



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Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation

The Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation represents an expression of His Majesty's esteem for those involved in environmental affairs at the international level. The Prize was an initiative announced by Sultan Qaboos on the occasion of his visit to UNESCO headquarters on 1 June 1989.

UNESCO awards the prize biennially to afford recognition of outstanding contributions by individuals, groups of individuals, societies or organisations in the management or preservation of the environment. The winning individuals or societies are chosen by the Bureau of the International Coordinating Council of UNESCO's Man and Biosphere (MAB). The prize is conferred at a ceremony held at UNESCO headquarters.

Since its inauguration in 1991, the prize has been awarded to more than one individual or society. In October 2015 it was announced that the winner is the Research Group for Wetlands from Buenos Aires University in Argentina. It was felt that the research team had done a great job in protecting the environment through the studies it had carried out on the ecological systems of the wetlands. The winner will be presented with the award at a UNESCO event in Budapest in November 2015.

Wildlife Conservation and Nature Reserves

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs administers most of Oman's 19 nature reserves including flagship reserves such as the Ras Al Jinz Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) Reserve and the Damaniyat Island Reserve where Oman's largest breeding population of hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricate*) turtles are found. Other important reserves include As Saleel Nature Park where Arabian gazelle are protected, Jabal Samhan, home to the Arabian leopard and Jabal Al Akhdar Scenic Reserve. Seven coastal lagoons (khawrs) of Dhofar are also protected. The most recently established reserves are Jabal Qahwan and the Wusta Wetland Reserve which is better known as the Bar al Hikman.

The Office for the Conservation of the Environment of the Diwan of Royal Court is responsible for five reserves including Oman's oldest reserve of Wadi AsSareen where the Arabian tahr is found. It also oversees the Al Wusta Wildlife Reserve, where the Arabian oryx was reintroduced in 1982; Khawr Salalah which provides refuge for numerous resident and migrant species of birds; Al Khuwair Natural Park in Muscat that protects one of the last stands of native *simr* (Acacia) trees and Wadi Ras As Shagar which protects Arabian gazelle on the coastal plain and ancient landscapes in the mountains to the south. The Oman Botanic Garden was established in Muscat in 2009.



The Office for the Conservation of the Environment of the Diwan of Royal Court is responsible for five reserves including Oman's oldest reserve of Wadi As Sareen.





The Sultanate was a pioneer in protecting the flora and fauna of its natural environment.

The Office for the Conservation of the Environment also runs a number of research projects including the Arabian Leopard Programme that was established in 1997. The history of the programme and the status of the leopard in Oman is the subject of the book *The Arabian Leopards of Oman* that was published in 2014. Other research includes a long term study of the Sooty Falcon, a bird that spends its' winters in Madagascar and breeds in the summer on the islands off Muscat, including Fahal and the Damaniyats.

Climate Change

Climate change, increase in temperature and depletion of the ozone layer are among the main challenges facing the world today in view of their negative economic and social impacts. Furthermore, the growth of the world's population and the rapid increase of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere serve to aggravate the problem and necessitate the adoption of methods to combat the effects of climate change sooner rather than later.

The Sultanate has adopted an environmental strategy which interacts concomitantly with changes in climate patterns and has instituted new measures which address climate change factors in all existing legislation. For example, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs evaluates the risks of climate change and depletion of the ozone layer and estimates consequent damage to long-term economic development and infrastructure as well as eco-

The Sultanate has adopted an environmental strategy which interacts concomitantly with changes in climate patterns and has instituted new measures which address climate change factors in all existing legislation.

and socio-systems on the basis of reliable and relevant international research in this area. It also evaluates suitable means of responding to the dangers posed by climate change and depletion of the ozone layer, as well options for reducing greenhouse gas emissions according to local circumstances in accordance with the goals of sustainable development. The Ministry has adopted a number of regulations in this regard, including a system of obtaining approvals for new projects in accordance with clean development principles outlined in the Kyoto Protocol and regulations for managing climatic aspects. Since May 2012 the Ministry has begun issuing permits pertaining to climatic aspects of new development projects, stipulating the parameters of greenhouse gas emissions arising from these and other projects with a view to encouraging a rational and efficient energy consumption. It also encourages developers to plant trees and ecologically compatible vegetation in order to minimise the effects of greenhouse gas emissions and improve the surrounding environment.

Regional Municipalities

The provision of services by the regional municipalities has grown exponentially in recent years as part of the Sultanate's comprehensive nationwide plan for sustainable development.

In 2014, the Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources implemented a number of projects including the upgrading of interior roads

The provision of services by the regional municipalities has grown exponentially in recent years as part of the Sultanate's comprehensive nationwide plan for sustainable development.

Ensuring that food and food products are suitable and safe for human consumption.



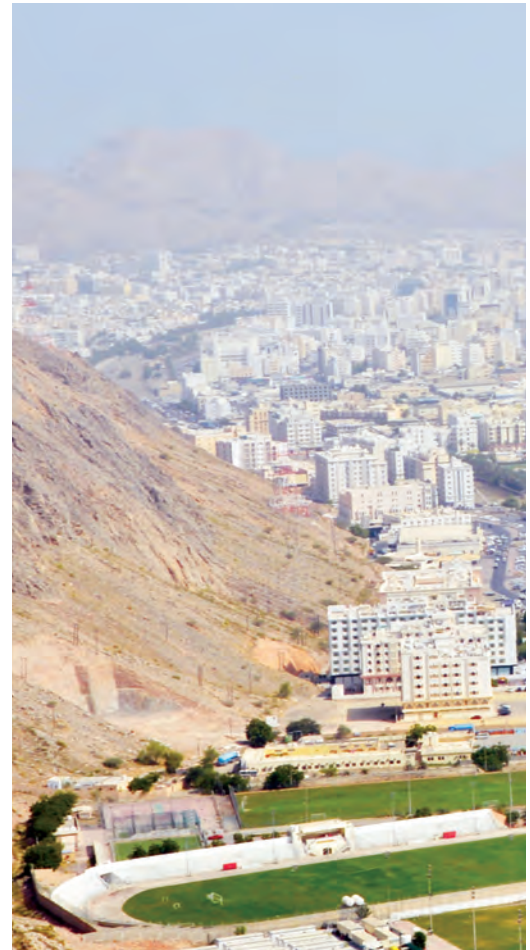
serving populations concentrations in villages and cities and accompanying street lighting schemes. The number of street lights erected throughout the Sultanate in 2014 was approximately 800.

Internal markets have also received their share of attention in view of their economic and social importance. Both modern and traditional markets are a vital resource for the population since they provide an amenity for obtaining daily necessities as well as a forum for the marketing of local produce. Continuous demographic and economic expansion have made development of local markets an urgent priority. Accordingly, the Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources has carried out a number of projects creating new, as well as upgrading existing, markets.

Public gardens and parks are an integral component of social and environmental development since they provide open spaces for recreational and cultural activities. To this end, a number of recreation areas and children's playgrounds have been in the framework of an overarching plan to expand the provision of green spaces throughout the Sultanate by utilization of treated waste water.

In order to monitor the pace of development, the Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources operates a system to regulate building and construction activity. This is done through the issuing of building permits and the inspection of buildings under construction. The Ministry also issues certificates for electricity and water connection and other services. The total of major certificates issued in 2014 was approximately 21,500.

The Food and Water Laboratories Centre continuously monitors foodstuffs and water in order to guarantee their fitness for human consumption. It subjects selected food and water samples to a rigorous analysis under laboratory conditions in order to their conformity to internationally approved standards. The number of samples analysed by the Centre in 2014 was around 4,055 in comparison with 4,833 samples in 2013. The Centre also operates eight



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branch laboratories in the wilayats of Barka, Saham, Al Buraymi, Musandam, Ibri, Nizwa, Ibra' and Sur which coordinate with the Centre by testing the quality of food products circulating in their local markets.

Housing

The Housing Sector plays a vitally important role since it is implicated in the distribution and planning of commercial and industrial as well as housing land in the Sultanate. It is also involved with transfer of land and real estate from one individual to another whether by sale, purchase, grant, inheritance or other legal transactions. In addition, it administers social housing programs for those on limited incomes and families on social security.

In 2014 the Ministry of Housing prepared a number of planning orders involving 48,695 plots of land for various purposes. The number of land grants amounted to 29,229 while 42,987 plots of land were initially registered for various uses.

Urban development and the provision of adequate housing for citizens are top priorities.



The global value of real estate which changed hands in 2014 rose to RO2.9 billion, in comparison with RO2.2 billion in 2013. Fees collected from legal transactions increased from RO33.5 million to RO48.6 million while 215,000 title deeds were issued, including 3114 to citizens from other GCC states.

The value of real estate transactions in the first half of 2015 rose by 45.9% to RO2.3 billion in comparison RO1.5 billion for the corresponding period in 2014 while fees from all legal transactions amounted to RO30.3 million and the number of title deeds issued in 2015 to the end of June was 130,000.

Social Housing Programmes

Social Housing Programmes for those on limited incomes aims to improve living conditions for Omani families and help them achieve social stability through the provision of suitable housing. The housing units program seeks to foster citizens' attachment to their local villages in practising economic and social activities such as traditional crafts, agriculture, fishing and pastoralism. In the period 2011 through 2014, 750 housing units were approved and implemented in the different governorates of the Sultanate.

The soft housing loans programme seeks to grant interest-free housing loans to Omani nationals of limited income on condition that the loan applicant's global monthly income varies between RO301 and RO500 at the time of registering the application and does not exceed RO600 at the time his/her turn comes. With regard to crafts people, their income is calculated on the basis of their average monthly income over the period of one year provided that it is within the limits of the above-mentioned figure when their turn comes.

Loans are granted for the purpose of building or purchasing a new house and are repayable in monthly instalments not exceeding 20% of the borrower's income.



The housing units programme seeks to foster citizens' attachment to their local villages in practising economic and social activities .

Electricity Sector

The Sultanate began to utilize renewable energy to generate electricity in 2015 when the first solar energy project came into commercial operation. This plant, which is located in the Wilayat of Al Mazyouna in Dhofar, has a daily generating capacity of 1667 kilowatts per hour.

In July 2015 contracts were signed for the construction of “Mirror”, the largest solar energy plant in the world, between PDO (Petroleum Development Oman) and Glass Point Solar Company. The plant will be located in the south of the Sultanate and will generate 1021 megawatts of solar energy. The sun’s rays will be utilized to produce steam for the high-performance extraction of oil by means of thermal energy, as well as heavy viscous oil from the Amal (Hope) oil field. It is anticipated that steam generation will commence at the beginning of 2017. The use of solar energy is part of Petroleum Development Oman’s long term strategy to extract heavy oil and reduce consumption of

The Barka power and desalination plant.



natural gas which is increasingly needed for other applications. The new plant will utilize solar energy to generate 6000 tons steam per day for oil production operations. On completion, the project will constitute an annual saving of 5.6 trillion BCUs (British Calorific Units) of natural gas, which can be exported or used to generate electricity for new industries and economic diversification. The amount of gas saved would meet the needs for electricity of 209,000 persons. The project also prevents the emission of 300,000 tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere annually.

Work is underway on the construction of another renewable energy project in Harweel in the *wilayat* of Shilim and the Hallaniyaat Islands in Dhofar. This plant will generate electricity through the use of wind power with a productive capacity reaching 50 megawatts. After commissioning, the plant will be operated by the Rural Areas Electricity Company.

These projects are coming onstream at a time when the Sultanate is developing a protocol to encourage the use of renewable energy through the use of roof-based solar panels, which could be used to generate electricity and export it to the network. The property thus becomes both a consumer and a supplier of electricity which necessitates drafting regulations with regard to the exchange of energy between the subscriber and the licensed supplier, as well as the operation of the power network and the incorporation of electricity units produced into that network.

In the field of conventional energy, a new electrical power station was opened in 2015 in Sur in the South Sharqiyah Governorate with a productive capacity of 2000 megawatts. This is the largest electrical power station in the Sultanate which will boost the national grid to meet the increasing demand for electricity as a result of demographic and developmental expansion. Six electrical power stations have been built in the past few years and electrical generation capacity has risen from 2,596 megawatts in 2005 to 7,594 megawatts at the beginning of 2015. Overall electricity production in the Sultanate in 2014 reached approximately 28,700 gigawatts and increase of 9.6% over 2013 with a productive capacity of 26,200 gigawatts. In the first five months of 2015 electricity capacity has increased by 16.8% to 11,800 gigawatts compared with 9,600 gigawatts in the corresponding period in 2014.

Water Sector

Establishing desalination plants is an important plank in the strategy of making available clean drinking water and to this end such plants have been constructed in Muscat, Barka, Sohar, Mirbat and Duqm, as well as smaller units to serve the needs of the towns and villages of the coastal strip. An amount of RO700 million was allocated to the water sector in the 8th Five-



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Year Plan (2011-2015) and this will be used to expand the water network in the different governorates of the country.

In view of the demographic and developmental expansion in the Muscat Governorate, the Public Authority for Electricity and Water (PAEW) constructed a major pipeline from the capital's desalination plant to a reservoir as a back-up for the existing water network. The Public Authority for Electricity and Water also completed the emergency reservoirs project to guarantee the water supply in the event of natural disasters or cessation of operation of water production plants. These new reservoirs will supply clean drinking water for a period of 7 days should water services be interrupted.

Numerous villages and population centres throughout the land have been connected to the water network grid in the framework of the Sultanate's plan to provide drinking water to all areas and existing water networks have been expanded and upgraded.

The total volume of water produced in the Sultanate in 2014 was 323.1 million m³ in comparison with 285.5 million m³ 2013 which represents an increase of 13.2%. The Sultanate's water production in the first four months of 2015 rose to 106.6 million m³ which represents an increase of 10.6% over the corresponding period in 2014.

Sohar Desalination plant part of a national strategy to ensure the supply of potable water for all.



Special amenity ports contribute to economic diversification (a harbour in Wilayat Masirah).

Oman's Ports

Geographically, the Sultanate of Oman is distinguished by an extensive coastline overlooking the Sea of Oman and the Arabian Gulf, as well as the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. This geographical advantage has been utilized to establish a group of ports which will play their part in the goal of the country's economic diversification. In the recent years of Oman's modern Renaissance, a series of ports have been constructed to promote commercial and industrial activities, as well as for the purpose of tourism and fisheries wealth. These ports have served to attract inward investment into while enhancing terms of trade between the Sultanate internationally, in the form of



increased import, export and re-export activity.

The longest serving port is *Port Sultan Qaboos* which was established in 1974 as the country's main import/export hub and was continuously developed during the years of Oman's Renaissance. At the beginning of 2015 it was converted from a commercial to a dedicated tourist port, with all import/export and container activities transferred to Sohar Industrial Port.

Port Sultan Qaboos handled a total of 2,324 vessels, including 97 tourist ships with a throughput of 305,000 tourist passengers.

Port Salalah benefits from its contiguity to international shipping lanes, a factor which has enabled it to develop into a major container port in the region. Its current operational capacity is 5 million standard containers per annum, utilizing six container ship berths. The Sultanate plans to expand the port by the addition of commercial, service and tourist quays and the construction of new breakwaters in order to raise its handling capacity to 7 million standard containers per annum. Further quays for liquid and general goods to serve industries in the Salalah Free Zone as well as the local industries and population are currently under construction and a number of

consultative tenders have been floated in connection with the port's security requirements and rehabilitation of the goods' terminal.

In 2014 Port Salalah processed 2,691 vessels, including 37 tourist ships and handled a total of 10.2 million tons of general goods compared with 7.9 million tons in 2013.

Sohar Industrial Port has a dual commercial and industrial purpose due to its being located near the site of heavy industries which are expected to enhance the Sultanate's commercial competitiveness in the region. The port is adjacent to industrial and commercial areas which will attract heavy



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industry projects in the oil and gas sphere such as petrochemicals production and oil and mining industries.

At the beginning of September 2014, Sohar Industrial Port began to process container and cargo ships as well as roll-on/roll-off vessels which were formerly handled at Port Sultan Qaboos. In 2014 the port handled 1918 ships with a throughput of 330,000 standard containers as against 215,000 in 2013.

The most recent of the Sultanate's major ports is *Duqm* in the Wusta Governorate. It began handling and cargo operations in March 2013 after the entry into service for commercial operations of Quay Number 1.

On 8 July 2015 Royal Decree 28/2015 was promulgated issuing the law granting the concession for the development, administration and operation of the Port of Duqm and the authorisation of the relevant agreements. The text of the decree specified the granting of the concession to develop, administer and operate the port to the project company, for a period of 28 years from the date of coming into force. The Port of Duqm, on which construction began in 2007, is one of the mega projects planned to energise the national economy and attract massive inward investment to the Sultanate thus contributing to the diversification of revenue sources. The port is strategically located in the vicinity of international shipping lanes, which should enable it to attract an important share of regional and international shipping, thus playing a significant role in the maritime transport network and fostering commercial and tourism movements between Oman's ports. A further part of the Sultanate's long-term plan is to establish a fully integrated city in the *wilayat* of Duqm which will attract maritime commerce as well as servicing a planned industrial city containing oil and petrochemicals refining, heavy and medium industries and repair and dry-dock facilities for ships and tankers.

The *Port of Khasab*, which is uniquely situated in the northern tip of the Sultanate overlooking the Straits of Hormuz, has been earmarked by the government for a greater role in promoting trade and commercial activity in the Musandam governorate. The government is currently working to upgrade Khasab Port as part of the comprehensive strategic vision for the economic development of the region, entitled Musandam 2040, currently under preparation. The port's operational and administrative capacities will be enhanced by the construction of docks and the creation of facilities for handling increased commercial and tourism activity.

In 2014 Khasab Port processed 1,388 commercial vessels and 42 tourist ships, with a throughput of 71,772 tourist passengers, as well as 57,000 smaller vessels.

The *Port of Shinas* is an important hub of economic activity in the wilayats of North Batinah region with their traditional concerns of fisheries wealth, livestock and agricultural produce. The port has undergone significant development since its inception in 1996. From a small harbour catering



The Port of Khasab, which is uniquely situated in the northern tip of the Sultanate overlooking the Straits of Hormuz, has been earmarked by the government for a greater role in promoting trade and commercial activity.



to the needs of local fishermen, it has gradually evolved and, in 2013, the Ministry of Transport and Communications completed a comprehensive plan to upgrade it to a state-of-the-art facility handling local and regional commerce, as well as tourism and fisheries wealth.

Last but not least is the harbour of Shannah on the Arabian Sea which facilitates the passage of tourists and nationals from and to the island of Masira. In 2014 the National Ferry Company put into operation two new ferries – *Shannah* and *Jewel of Masirah* – to run alongside the existing vessels in linking Masirah to the mainland.

Land Transport

The Sultanate constantly strives to maintain the quality and efficiency of the land transport sector by constructing new motorways and expanding the existing road network through dualisation and the building of flyovers to the highest traffic safety specifications. A concurrent aim is to link rural areas to population centres by extending the unpaved road network facilitating the interaction between town and country with consequent benefits to Oman's economy.

A major ongoing project is the dualisation of the Bidbid-Sur 240 km long highway, which when completed will facilitate movement between Muscat Governorate and the *wilayats* of the North and South Sharqiyah Governorates.

The Sultanate constantly strives to maintain the quality and efficiency of the land transport sector by constructing new motorways and expanding the existing road network through dualisation and the building of flyovers to the highest traffic safety specifications.

Modern road projects serve the growth of urban, commercial and tourist traffic.



The 265-km long Al Batinah expressway is also under construction and 2015 saw the opening of the first sector of this project. Sections of Bidbid-Sur highway were also opened, as were the Izz-Adam and Firq-Marfa Daris dual carriageways in the Dakhiliya Governorate. Other road projects currently in hand will on completion contribute to raising the operational capacity of Oman's road network to cope with the increasing volume of traffic.

In 2014 the Ministry of Transport and Communications oversaw a national road network , with a total length of 13,857 km of paved roads and 16,414 km of unpaved roads.

The Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources also undertakes road projects in different areas of the interior and in 2014 completed 61 km of new road, bringing the total length of roads completed between 2001 and 2014 to 7660 km in the Sultanate's governorates. In 2014 the Ministry undertook a total of 88 road building projects in different areas of the country.

In the capital city area the Muscat Municipality carried out a number of projects in the *wilayats* of the governorate, including the Darseit-Wadi al Kabir link which entailed the construction of flyovers and intersections, as did the Al Mahej project in the *wilayat* of Al Amirat, sections of which were opened in 2015. Muscat Municipality also expanded the street network associated with the Al Sahwa roundabout and established the Fourth District on Sultan Qaboos Street between the Al Mawaleh and Muscat International Airport intersections. New free interchanges were also constructed on the Muscat expressway in the south Maabela district and work was carried out on a number of other projects.

As part of its efforts to consolidate the governorate's infrastructure and expand its road network, Dhofar Municipality carried out a number of projects, including the addition of the Third District on Al Ribat Street in Salalah City and the dualisation and construction of flyovers to deal with the city's bottlenecks. In addition, Dhofar Municipality completed a total of 325 kms of internal roads and highway in the various *wilayats* of the governorate.

Oman Rail

The Oman railway project is an important plank in the government's strategy for sustainable economic and social development by linking the country's centres of production and growth. Rail is a form of transport, hitherto unused in the region, which has the capacity to transport massive quantities of goods and materials as well as large numbers of passengers over long distances, thereby making a vital and powerful contribution to the transport sector and to long-term sustainable development. The Oman railway project also aims to create new industries and services to support local productivity and to create quality employment opportunities so as to turn the Sultanate into



The Oman railway project is an important plank in the government's strategy for sustainable economic and social development by linking the country's centres of production and growth.



an exporter of skilled labour. Railways will play a pivotal role in integrating the Sultanate's land, sea and air communications into an over arching GCC transportation system in the shortest possible time frame.

Oman Rail was inaugurated as a commercial entity in 2015 after inviting tenders from qualified companies to implement the Sohar-Al Buraymi railway project in the previous year. Three agreements pertaining to the railway project were signed with a total value of RO13.9 million, the most important of which related to consultancy services for the initial design of a 2,244 km long railway with operational speeds of 200 kilometres per hour for passenger trains and between 80 and 120 kilometres per hour for goods trains.

The Sultanate is also engaged in reorganising the land transport sector by updating its laws and ordinances, through the issuance of a Land Transport Law specifying the provision of optimum services in the transport of people and goods in accordance with the dictates of economic development. Further, work has been completed on the first draft of a structural study of transport in the Muscat governorate, which aims to establish a fully integrated transport system to serve all sectors of society in accordance with the highest standards of best practice in order to limit traffic congestion and environmental pollution. A study has also been completed in relation to the installation of fixed weigh stations on major and minor roads to address the problem of overloading of trucks, with its associated damage to the structure of the roadway, and thereby lessen the cost of highway maintenance.

Air Transport

The first phase of the new Muscat International Airport was rolled out in December 2014. It comprises a new runway, Control Tower, Air Traffic Administration Complex and the Civil Aviation Authority Building. A further landmark event was the entry into operation on 15th June 2015 of the new Salalah Airport, which comprises a 65,000 m² passenger terminal, with an annual throughput capacity of 2 million passengers, and a 4 km long 75m wide runway capable of accommodating the most up-to-date aircraft.

Building on the completed phases of the regional airports project, two further airports began operations in 2014 at Duqm and Sohar. These airports are operating with temporary passenger terminals pending completion of their third phase.

The construction of the new airports at Muscat and Salalah, as well as internal airports at Sohar, Ras al Hadd and Duqm, is part of the Sultanate's plan to keep abreast of growth in the economic, tourism and air cargo sectors. In the first phase of this plan, it is anticipated that throughput capacity will exceed 15 million passengers per annum, 12 million of which will pass through the new Muscat International Airport. On completion of the fourth phase of its development the throughput capacity of Muscat International Airport is expected to rise to 48 million passengers per annum.



Building on the completed phases of the regional airports project, two further airports began operations in 2014 at Duqm and Sohar. These airports are operating with temporary passenger terminals pending completion of their third phase.





The new internal and regional airports at Sohar, Ras al Hadd and Duqm form part of an integrated strategy to develop the civil aviation sector by providing an improved air network throughout the Sultanate in order to enhance economic and social development and promote tourism. These airports have been designed to accommodate wide-body aircraft for international, as well as internal and regional, operation.

The air transport sector is overseen by the Civil Aviation Authority whose remit is to maintain a high standard of operational efficiency at new and existing airports. In 2014 the number of air movements handled by Muscat International Airport rose to 82,000 internal and international flights, an increase of 1.5% over the previous year and a total of 8.7 million passengers passed through the airport in comparison with 8.3 million in 2013.

Air movements handled by Salalah Airport rose to 8,571 flights in contrast to 7,432 flights in 2013 and the number of passengers who passed through increased to 842,000 as opposed to 745,000 in the previous year.

Oman Air, the Sultanate's national carrier has played its part in the increase in passenger traffic, on the Muscat-Salalah route as well as operating flights between the capital and Sohar, Duqm and Khasab.



Passenger volumes have increased in Muscat and Salalah airports this year; in the first five months of 2015 a total of 4 million passengers passed through Muscat International Airport compared with 3.7 million in the corresponding period in 2014 and the throughput at Salalah Airport was 319,000 passengers compared with 361,000 in the same period.

Oman Air, the Sultanate's national carrier has played its part in the increase in passenger traffic, on the Muscat-Salalah route as well as operating flights between the capital and Sohar, Duqm and Khasab as well as the oil production regions. In 2014 Oman Air operated 23,000 flights and transported 5.1 million passengers as opposed to 4.1 million in 2014. In 2014/5 Oman Air launched new routes to the Philippines, Indonesia and Singapore and by the end of 2015 the company expects to increase the number of its destinations to 51, having contracted to purchase 6 Boeing 787 Dreamliners. It is anticipated that the Oman Air fleet will have increased to 70 aircraft by the beginning of 2020.

A promising future awaits the newly completed Salalah International Airport.



Modern transport craft ferry between the Sultanate's major and minor ports.

Sea Transport

The Sultanate's favourable geographic location adjacent to the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea, as well as the Arabian Gulf, afford unique scope for the development of sea transport for the development of both commerce and tourism. Moreover, Oman boasts a long standing maritime heritage fashioned by Omani sailors and merchants who sailed to distant parts of the globe.

In the modern era, too, the ports situated along the length of Oman's coastline present opportunities to boost national productivity, by stimulating growth in many sectors of the economy. To this end, the wholly government owned Oman Shipping Company is engaged in creating a fleet of crude oil, chemicals and LPG tankers consisting of 43 vessels with a carrying capacity of 8 million tonnes.

At the same time the National Ferries Company is building up a ferry fleet linking the Sultanate's ports to boost the economic and tourism sectors. The company transports passengers, vehicles and goods between Oman's

ports, as well as offering short tourist voyages to view the natural beauty of the Muscat governorate's shoreline.

Passenger and goods traffic on ferries operated by the National Ferries Company grew substantially in 2014, the number of passengers carried rising to 93,000 in comparison to 33,000 in 2013. The carriage of vehicles also increased to 21,048 in comparison with 5,350 in the previous year. Much of this increase was due to the inauguration of the Shannah-Masirah line which, from the start of its operation on 14 August 2014 until the end of the year, carried approximately 51,000 passengers and 14,000 vehicles and in the first half of 2015 transported 81,000 passengers and 21,000 vehicles in comparison with 20,000 passengers and 3,000 vehicles in the corresponding period in 2014.

Communications Sector

The communications sector has ushered in a number of initiatives aimed at maintaining the high quality of its performance and the services it offers. Pride of place goes to the entry into operation of the National Broadband Company, whose remit is to develop the infrastructure for the Sultanate's broadband network.

The National Broadband strategy approved by the Council of Ministers in 2013 has a number of aims, chief of which is enable citizens to access the high-speed broadband network at affordable prices. A concomitant objective is to provide companies with a global broadband service in order to improve their international competitiveness. Last but not least is the rolling out of broadband services to rural communities with a view to reducing the digital divide.

The completion of the first and second stages of the project will entail creation of an expanded fibre-optic network that will enhance the communications infrastructure.

The number of fixed telephone lines by the end of 2014 stood at 375,000 compared with 351,000 by the end of 2013. The number of mobile phone subscribers rose from 5.6 million to 6.2 million, the majority of subscriptions being pre-paid services.

The total number of users of fixed internet services (including ADSL and home broadband subscribers) totalled 180,000 at the end of 2014, achieving a coverage of 44.7% in comparison to 39.4% at the end of 2013. The number of active subscribers to mobile broadband grew by 18.4% to 2.9 million, achieving a coverage of 72.4%.

Growth in services continued in the first half of 2015 with the



The number of fixed telephone lines by the end of 2014 stood at 375,000 compared with 351,000 by the end of 2013.



number of fixed telephone lines totalling 402,000. Mobile phone subscribers increased to 6.4 million and the number of mobile phone broadband users rose to 3.1 million while users of home broadband services totalled 198,000.

Oman Post

By developing its services and introducing new ones following Royal Decree 84/2005, Oman Post aims to keep pace with the country's economic development.

It now has a link-up with the Ministry of Housing which facilitates documentation and acts as a bridge between the applicant and the Ministry. An e-Post service has also been introduced. It offers a free ID which enables people to send and receive digital mail.

At present Oman Post has 88 offices and 6,000 post boxes across the country.

Amongst the special postage stamps and 'covers' issued in 2014 were a December series on the wildlife of Oman which depicted six different birds, the Arabian Gazelle, and four butterflies in denominations of 100, 150 and 200 baizas.

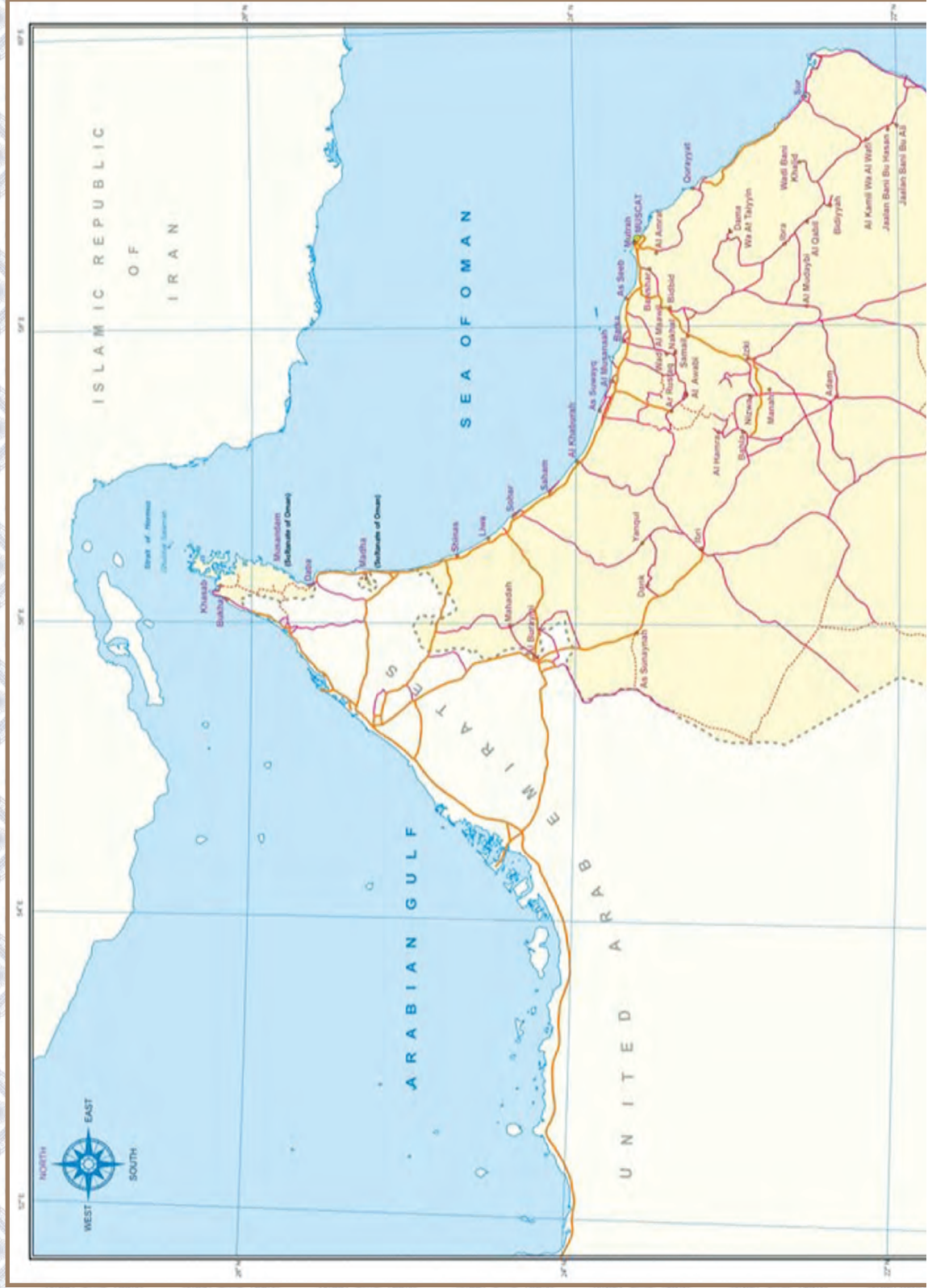


The communications sector has ushered in a number of initiatives aimed at maintaining the high quality of its performance and the services it offers.



An efficient telecommunications sector is key to the success of economic and social development programmes.

SULTANATE OF OMAN



OMAN – FACTS AND FIGURES

Basic Information

Area	309,500 square Kilometres
Capital	Muscat
Religion	Islam
Official Language	Arabic (English widespread in the economic and education sectors)
Time	Four hours ahead of GMT
Currency	Omani Rial=US\$ 2.60 (387 baizas to the US Dollar)
Climate	Temperate (30°C) from October to March, but hot (up to 50° C) and humid from April to September, except in Dhofar where it rains during the monsoon season.

Economic Indicators

	Unit	2014	Up to June 2015
GDP at Current Prices	RO million	31,450.8	13,552.1
Total Government Revenues	RO million	14,107.8	4,579.7
Total Government Expenditure	RO million	15,171.8	5,798.2
Average Daily Oil Production	1,000 bbls	943.5	970.6
Average Price of Oil over a Year	US\$/barrels	103.2	59.3
Total Commodity Exports	RO million	20,463.4	-
Including Non-oil Exports of Omani Origin	RO million	4,125.5	-
Total Commodity Imports	RO million	11,267.6	-
Total Electricity Production	Gigawatts/Hour	29,128	15,293.6
Water Production per distillation (Plants and Wells)	1000 cubic metres	319	162

Social Indicators

	Unit	2014
Total Population (Mid-year assessment)	1,000s	3,993.000
Omanis	1,000s	2,261.000
Expatriates	1,000s	1,732.000
Hospitals	No.	67
Hospital Beds	No.	6,561
Doctors per 1,000 patients	10,000	2.17
Nurses (male and female)	10,000	4.70
Schools	No.	1,580*
Students	No.	679,469*
Government Civil Service Employees	No.	232,980
Omanis Registered at the Public Authority For Social Insurance	No.	197,510
Expatriate Manpower in the Private Sector	No.	1,510.393**
Asphalted Roads	Km	34,557
Internet Subscribers	No.	180,144
Hotels and Accommodation	No.	789

Source: National Centre for Statistics and Information

(*) Registered at the Directorate General of Civil Status

(**) Government Education includes Special Education schools

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